

THE STRAITS TIMES

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Donations bring warmth to China's Snowflake Boy **A8**



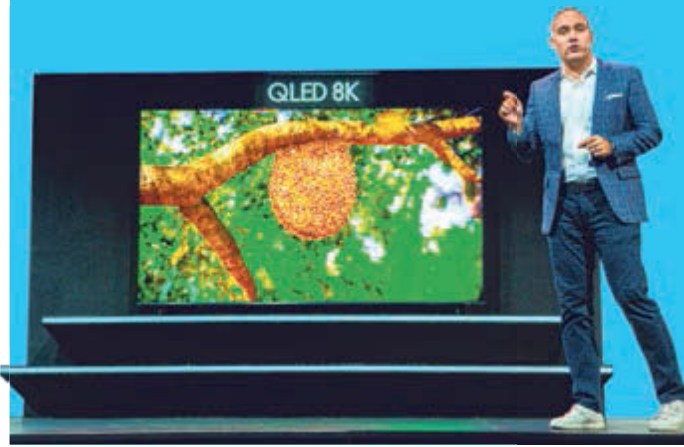
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TV host Pornsak sues F&B group **A5**



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World TV wars at consumer electronics trade show **A16**



Top of the News N. Korean leader Kim visits China **A8** • Home Teeth unearthed in Singapore dig **B1&2**

S'pore, Malaysia take steps to tackle bilateral disputes

KL suspends Pasir Gudang restricted area for a month, S'pore does same for Seletar procedures

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent

Singapore and Malaysia are taking steps to defuse their air and maritime tensions, as foreign ministers on both sides reiterated their commitment "to preserving the vital relationship between both countries and to improving bilateral ties, on the basis of equality and mutual respect".

Both countries are locked in two separate disputes – over territorial waters off Tuas and airspace management over southern Johor.

On the air front, the ministers said yesterday that Malaysia will immediately suspend its permanent restricted area over Pasir Gudang for flights, while Singapore will do the same for new aircraft landing procedures for Seletar Airport.

The arrangement will be for a month, in the first instance.

In a joint declaration after a meeting in Singapore yesterday, Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and his Malaysian counterpart Saifuddin Abdullah stressed the need to keep the situation on the ground calm to allow discussions to take place.

They said the transport ministers of both countries should meet soon for discussions "to ensure the safety and efficiency of civil aviation".

On maritime issues, the ministers said a working group will be set up, headed by permanent secretary for foreign affairs Chee Wee Kiong and his Malaysian counterpart Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob.

It will study and discuss the legal and operational matters in order to de-escalate the situation on the ground, and provide a basis for further discussions and negotiations.

Addressing a joint press conference, both ministers stressed that Singapore and Malaysia have strong, close ties.

Dr Balakrishnan said: "Malaysia and Singapore will always be close and permanent neighbours. That is a geographical fact. And it is essential that we always have a constructive and cooperative bilateral relationship. Both of us, my brother Saifuddin from Malaysia and I – we had a very positive, very constructive and very necessary meeting today."

The air disagreement first surfaced on Nov 23, when Malaysian carrier Firefly said it would suspend all flights to Singapore from Dec 1, the day it was supposed to move its operations from Changi to Seletar Airport. Malaysia objects to new landing procedures for Seletar, claiming they would impose height restrictions and affect developments in Pasir Gudang.

Singapore has, however, denied this, saying that the only change on introducing an Instrument Landing System (ILS) is that pilots will be guided using ground instruments so that they no longer have to rely on just their vision.

On Dec 25, Malaysia established a permanent restricted area for the purpose of military activities over

STRONG TIES

Malaysia and Singapore will always be close and permanent neighbours. That is a geographical fact. And it is essential that we always have a constructive and cooperative bilateral relationship.



FOREIGN MINISTER VIVIAN
BALAKRISHNAN

Pasir Gudang. This means that flights from any country, including from Malaysia, would need prior approval from the Royal Malaysian Air Force to operate in that zone between 2,000 and 5,000 feet.

Singapore is concerned that the restricted area being in a "controlled and congested airspace" would impact the existing and normal operations of aircraft transiting through, the Transport Ministry said last week. The provision of air traffic services for the airspace over southern

Johor had been delegated by Malaysia to Singapore in 1974. Malaysia now wants to take back the management of the airspace.

At sea, Kuala Lumpur had on Oct 25 unilaterally extended the port limits for Johor Baru port, such that they encroach on Singapore's territorial waters off Tuas. As a result, Malaysian government vessels had entered Singapore's waters.

The new boundary line extends beyond what Malaysia had previously claimed as its own waters in a 1979 map, which Singapore has never accepted. Singapore on Dec 6 extended its own port limits in response, to cover the full extent of the Republic's territorial waters.

The working group being formed to discuss issues surrounding the two port limits is to report to the foreign ministers within two months.

Said Mr Saifuddin: "We have a long history of good relations and there is only one way to go forward – that is to become stronger in our ties and improve in our relations."

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat, who with Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean met Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in Putrajaya on Dec 31 to discuss the disputes, said in a Facebook post: "As neighbours, Singapore and Malaysia have deep historical, economic, cultural, and people-to-people ties. It is important that we have a constructive and peaceful relationship and find win-win solutions that benefit the peoples of both countries."

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS **A6**, FORUM **B9**

US-China trade talks stretch past deadline

Trade negotiators from China and the United States worked to resolve a number of thorny issues yesterday in Beijing, with talks expected to continue today.

The talks, initially planned for two days, began on Monday. This is the first time the two sides have met face to face since their respective presidents met in Argentina last December.

US President Donald Trump expressed optimism yesterday, tweeting: "Talks with China are going very well!"

Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He, who is Mr Xi Jinping's top economic adviser, made a surprise appearance at the negotiations on Monday in a sign the Chinese were also pushing for a positive outcome.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said yesterday that Beijing would release a statement after the talks concluded, but did not give a timing.

Since the two presidents met on Dec 1, China has made a number of concessions to US demands, including temporarily cutting punitive tariffs on US-made cars, resuming soya bean purchases, promising to open up its markets for more foreign investment, and drafting a law to prevent forced technology transfers.

Yesterday, China also approved five genetically modified crops from the US for import, the first time it has done so in about 18 months.

Without a resolution to the dispute, US duty rates on US\$200 billion (S\$271.8 billion) in Chinese goods are due to rise to 25 per cent from 10 per cent on March 2.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS **A4**

Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and his Malaysian counterpart Saifuddin Abdullah ending their joint press conference with a warm handshake, after their meeting in Singapore yesterday.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO



Safety lapse at TTSH Dental Clinic: Disciplinary action taken against 18 staff

Rei Kurohi

Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) has taken disciplinary action, which included warnings and financial penalties, against 18 staff who were responsible for a safety lapse at the hospital's dental clinic.

Between Nov 28 and Dec 5 last year, up to eight patients may have been treated with equipment that had not undergone the final stage of a sterilisation process.

Those disciplined included senior management and supervisors who failed to adhere to the established quality and safety requirements, the National Healthcare Group (NHG) said in a statement

yesterday. They will also be counselled and will undergo retraining and education, the NHG added.

The NHG review committee that conducted the investigation into the lapse was chaired by Professor Chua Hong Choon, chief executive of the Institute of Mental Health, and included experts from other health clusters.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) said that it had received the incident reports from the NHG and TTSH and would be reviewing them along with its own investigations to determine if further regulations or other actions are necessary.

The NHG said that "human error" was the main cause of the incident. Dental instruments at the TTSH

clinic are usually manually washed, put through ultrasonic cleaning and air-dried. As a final step, they are then steam-sterilised.

The committee's investigations found that on Nov 28, a member of the staff at the clinic had loaded eight packs of instruments into an autoclave machine used for steam sterilisation but had failed to initiate the process.

Later, another staff member unloaded and stored the packs without realising that they had not undergone steam sterilisation. The packs were also not verified for sterility before being used for treatments.

Each pack of instruments is typically used for treating one patient, although some patients may re-

quire more than one pack.

On Dec 4, a third member of the clinic's staff discovered that a dental instrument had not undergone steam sterilisation.

A physical check of all dental instruments was conducted on Dec 5 and the clinic confirmed on Dec 7 that the eight affected packs did not undergo this final step.

TTSH then suspended all elective procedures at the clinic from Dec 8 to Dec 12 for a safety time-out. All of the clinic's dental instruments were checked during this period and additional measures taken to ensure the sterilisation process was properly completed.

Various safety procedures were stepped up at TTSH following the in-

cident. For example, loading the autoclave machine and starting the sterilisation process were linked together as one step. Verifying that the packs had undergone steam sterilisation must also be done before unloading them.

On Dec 9, the hospital began contacting the 575 patients who were treated during the period to inform them of the incident and to assure them that the risk of infection was "extremely low".

Professor Philip Choo, group chief executive of the NHG, yesterday apologised for the incident and thanked the committee for its review and recommendations.

He said: "Patient safety will continue to be our utmost priority, and

we hold our staff to the highest standards of quality and safe care of patients. We will work harder to ensure that the well-being and safety of our patients are best served in all our institutions."

MOH said that the incident was a "timely reminder" for all healthcare institutions.

An MOH spokesman said: "Patient safety is paramount. Following the incident at TTSH Dental Clinic, MOH has instructed all public and private healthcare institutions to further strengthen their systems and ensure staff awareness and strict adherence to all processes for patient safety and care."

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10 must-reads for today

1 Macron bid to end protests
French President Emmanuel Macron has offered to engage ordinary voters in a vast national public debate over the country's future economic and social priorities in a bid to put an end to a wave of violent protests over the past two months. However, critics have dismissed Mr Macron's offer as a publicity gimmick. **WORLD A10**



A yellow-vest protester and his comrades watching the dismantling of a yellow-vest camp installed at a roundabout in Nice, France, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

2 S'pore, KL tackle disputes
Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and his Malaysian counterpart Saifuddin Abdullah stressed after a meeting the need to keep the situation calm. Malaysia will suspend its permanent restricted area over Pasir Gudang for flights, while Singapore will suspend new aircraft landing procedures for Seletar Airport. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 A lever for Trump
The exit of World Bank president Jim Yong Kim potentially hands US President Donald Trump a key lever over development lenders with whom his administration has been at odds. Mr Trump now could have a chance to influence how countries like China access concessional lending by nominating an American as the next leader of the multilateral lender. **TOP OF THE NEWS A4**

4 Ghosn appears in court
Auto industry titan Carlos Ghosn protested his innocence over financial misconduct allegations yesterday in his first court appearance since being detained for 50 days. The hearing drew huge public interest, with 1,122 people standing in line for the 14 public gallery seats available. **WORLD A11**

5 China's ticking debt bomb
China's plans to stimulate its slowing economy are worrying as they are likely to worsen already high debt levels, says associate editor Vikram Khanna (below). **OPINION A17**



6 AVA has power to arrest
News of the arrest of the operator of pet boarding facility Platinum Dogs Club by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore had netizens wondering if AVA had the authority to do that. The answer is yes, if the offences fall under any of nine Acts and their subsidiary legislation. **HOME B2**

7 Scoot flight disruption
In the latest in a string of disruptions for Scoot, a flight from Singapore to Melbourne had to turn back after take-off. A fault with the aircraft's weather radar component resulted in the decision to head back to Changi Airport 48 minutes after the plane departed at 11am yesterday. **HOME B3**

8 Redeveloping Golden Mile
The iconic Golden Mile Complex may be developed as an integrated project with a gross floor area of 85,977.5 sq m if it finds a buyer, but its landmark main building will have to be retained, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) has said. **BUSINESS C1**

9 Making ice skating hot
After short track speed skater Cheyenne Goh's breakthrough as Singapore's first Winter Olympian last year, the International Skating Union sees the Republic playing a bigger role in the sport's development in South-east Asia. Winter sports will again feature in the SEA Games this year. **SPORT C7**

10 Eat, sleep beside warriors
Travellers can eat, sleep and use the bathroom with terracotta warriors by their side at this popular hotel in downtown Xi'an, home to the Terracotta Army, one of China's biggest tourist attractions. **LIFE D8**



PHOTO: XINHUA

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VIDEO

Sisters in symphony

Karen and Elaine Yeo are sisters who have played in the Singapore Symphony Orchestra for almost 30 years. They tell us how they started their journey as orchestral musicians. <http://str.sg/SSOsisters>



PODCAST

Money Hacks

In this episode, wine consultant Roderic Proniewski talks about investing in wine. Also, find out how to use the website ST Wine to know more about both wine investment and enjoyment. <http://str.sg/moneyhacks31>

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AGC: Lee Suet Fern's case referred to Law Society in accordance with law

Linette Lai
Political Correspondent
and Ng Huiwen

The Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC) said yesterday it acted according to the law in referring a case of possible professional misconduct by Mrs Lee Suet Fern to the Law Society.

Its statement was in response to media queries on a Facebook post Mrs Lee's husband, Mr Lee Hsien Yang, made on Monday evening when he questioned the AGC's move.

The AGC also said its actions are consistent with how it has handled

other cases of alleged professional misconduct by lawyers.

Last year, it referred five cases to the Law Society, the AGC told The Straits Times.

In the case involving Mrs Lee, the AGC said on Monday that she appears to have prepared the last will of her father-in-law, founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, and arranged for him to execute it in 2013.

It added that this placed her in a position of conflict and was a breach of the rules governing the conduct of lawyers because her husband was a beneficiary in the will.

In a Facebook post the same evening, Mr Lee Hsien Yang said

his wife was never the late Mr Lee's lawyer and questioned the timing of the AGC's decision and the public interest being served.

"What public interest is being served by AGC here? Why waste public resources on a private matter, and after all this time?" he said.

"Why is AGC rushing this case in 2019 when the facts were known by all parties for years?"

Together with his sister Lee Wei Ling, Mr Lee Hsien Yang is feuding with his older brother, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, over the fate of their father's house at 38 Oxley Road.

In June 2017, PM Lee released an

edited summary of his statutory declaration made to a ministerial committee looking into options for the house. In it, he said their late father made six wills before his last will in December 2013, and all six were prepared by lawyer Kwa Kim Li.

PM Lee questioned the role Mrs Lee Suet Fern played in the preparation of the seventh and last will, listing a series of e-mails in which Mr Lee Hsien Yang said he could not get in touch with Ms Kwa, and suggested that lawyers from his wife's firm could prepare the new will instead.

The late Mr Lee agreed to this suggestion, and lawyers from Mrs

Lee's law firm procured his signature on the last will.

The younger Mr Lee had said lawyers from his wife's firm did not draft the last will but that it was done by Ms Kwa. But Ms Kwa has denied drafting it.

In Monday's Facebook post, Mr Lee Hsien Yang also said the AGC's assertion that his wife had refused to respond to it was untrue, and called on the AGC to release its full correspondence with his wife.

The AGC, in its response yesterday, said there will be a full hearing before the disciplinary tribunal appointed by the Chief Justice, and Mrs Lee can present her case there.

It added that it does not propose to comment further on the merits of the matter and reminded "all parties to be mindful not to prejudice the proper hearing of the matter".

On the five cases referred to the Law Society last year, the AGC said all of them involved direct referrals to the disciplinary tribunal.

It also said it had made referrals

to the society for a wide range of misconduct by lawyers. This includes acting in conflict of interest, wasting the court's time and misleading the court, scandalous cross-examination and witness coaching.

In 2015, for example, the AGC wrote to the Law Society that lawyer S.K. Kumar had acted without his client's authority, failed to use his best endeavours to complete work for his client as soon as possible, wasted the court's time and misled the court in a number of his cases. He was fined \$25,000 and disbarred.

In 2016, the AGC filed a disciplinary complaint against lawyer Edmund Wong, who focused on the breast size of a molestation victim in his cross-examination. Last year, Mr Wong was handed a five-year suspension by the Court of Three Judges, the highest disciplinary body for the legal profession.

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Optimism in the air as US-China trade talks go past deadline

Analysts view it as a good sign that both sides are serious about hammering out finer details of an eventual deal

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

Trade talks between China and the United States stretched past their expected deadline yesterday, as negotiators worked to resolve a bitter trade dispute between their two countries.

The two-day talks that began on Monday in the Chinese capital were the first face-to-face meeting between officials of both countries since their respective presidents met in Argentina last December.

Mr Steven Winberg, Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy at the US Department of Energy, told reporters in Beijing yesterday that talks had gone well.

"I confirm we're continuing tomorrow, yes," he said, declining to answer further questions.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry said yesterday Beijing would release a statement after the negotiations had concluded, but did not give a time for when this might be.

Both sides were working on how to ensure China would follow through on its pledges, reported The Wall Street Journal. The US delegation is expected to leave Beijing this afternoon.

Posting on Twitter late yesterday night, Mr Hu Xijin, the editor of nationalist tabloid Global Times, said talks had not concluded after "two days of tough work".

"This sends a signal: The two sides are in serious talks and working hard to solve the disagreements between them," he wrote.

The US has imposed tariffs on US\$250 billion (\$339.6 billion) in Chinese goods, and has threatened to further increase duties on US\$200 billion worth of goods. Beijing has responded with tariffs on US\$110 billion in US goods, in areas such as agriculture and the auto industry.

Last month, US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping had agreed to a 90-day truce in their trade war, giving their officials time to hash out a deal.

Yesterday, Mr Trump tweeted: "Talks with China are going very well!"

Ahead of the expected end of the talks yesterday, expectations were running high for a positive outcome. US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told CNBC on Monday: "There's a very good chance that we'll get a reasonable settlement."

Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He, who is Mr Xi's top economic adviser and China's top negotiator in the trade discussions, also made a surprise appearance on the first day of what were supposed to be vice-ministerial-level talks.

Mr Liu reportedly made brief remarks at the meeting. Observers said his appearance was a clear sign of the importance the Chinese leadership was attaching to the talks.

Asked about this at a press briefing yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said it was "reasonable" for Mr Liu to make an appearance as he was at the forefront of US-China trade talks.

Analysts viewed the fact that talks had stretched past their deadline as a good sign, and said it could point to both sides being serious about hammering out the finer details of an eventual trade agreement.

Beijing-based economist Hu Xingdou said indications were both sides wanted to reach an agreement, noting that China was especially serious about the outcome.

Since December, Beijing has made some efforts to address US complaints – resuming purchases of US soya beans, suspending import tariffs on US cars and also releasing a draft foreign investment law banning forced technology transfers.

Yesterday, China also approved five genetically modified crops from the US for import, the first time it has done so in about 18 months.

"Both sides have the need to reach a deal, but for China especially – its economy is weakening and is entering a critical period," said Professor Hu.

Dr Wang Huiyao, president of the Beijing-based Centre for China and Globalisation think-tank, agreed both sides were showing the "desire to eventually work out a deal".

"I think the possibility for them to reach a consensus is high," he said.

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World Bank chief executive Kristalina Georgieva (above) will serve as interim president after Mr Jim Yong Kim (left) steps down on Feb 1. Mr Kim's departure means US President Donald Trump could now have a chance to influence how countries like China access concessional lending. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, NYTIMES

As the biggest shareholder, the United States has sway over the selection of the new World Bank president, a post which for 75 years has always been filled by an American, with the backing of European nations. But having uprooted those alliances in his two years in office, Mr Trump will find it difficult to simply submit a nominee for acclamation, especially as there have been growing calls for the institution to be guided by someone from the countries it serves.

World Bank chief's exit could give Trump lever over lending to China

WASHINGTON • The surprise early departure of World Bank president Jim Yong Kim potentially hands US President Donald Trump a key lever over development lenders with whom his administration has been at odds.

After reshaping the United States presidency, traditional alliances, trade relations and the US Supreme Court, Mr Trump now could have a chance to influence how countries like China access concessional lending.

But if Mr Trump wants an American in the post, he will need to pick a candidate who can win the support of most shareholders, and will likely face many challengers.

As the biggest shareholder, the US has sway over the selection of the new World Bank president, a post which for 75 years has always been filled by an American, with the backing of European nations.

But having uprooted those alliances in his two years in office, Mr Trump will find it difficult to simply submit a nominee for acclamation, especially as there have been growing calls for the institution to be guided by someone from the countries it serves.

"This White House has a pretty challenging path ahead if it thinks it wants to install a candidate," said Mr Scott Morris, a former US Treasury

official who worked with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The unspoken agreement to have an American lead the World Bank and a European at the IMF has come under fire in recent years, and both institutions have seen candidates from Nigeria and Mexico challenge the current leaders.

And given a "very unpopular" American president, there are certain to be challengers in the process to replace Mr Kim, said Mr Morris, of the Centre for Global Development.

Mr Kim, who became the bank's president in 2012, announced on Monday that he would step down on Feb 1, not even halfway through his second five-year term, to accept an "unexpected" opportunity in the private sector, he told bank staff.

With the US attitude towards the bank's goals of reducing global poverty ranging from neglect to active attacks, Mr Kim may find working with a private organisation will allow him to better effect change.

In a note to staff, Mr Kim said "it's time for me to take on new challenges and fully focus my efforts on leveraging private finance for the benefit of people around the world".

As Mr Trump and his trade team have focused on aggressive trade negotiations, especially with China, the US Treasury Department has reg-

ularly criticised the World Bank, for allowing relatively well-off countries like China to borrow from the development lender.

In one of Mr Kim's signature achievements, he led negotiations to convince shareholders – especially Washington – to agree early last year to a "historic" US\$13 billion (\$17.7 billion) increase in the bank's lending capacity. That deal, reached under the spectre of a US veto, included a reform agreement that middle-income economies like China would graduate and pay more to borrow from the bank.

But since the US has not even named a representative to sit on the World Bank board, it remains to be seen whether Mr Trump will want to fight for the leadership.

Mr Paul Cadario, who spent his career at the World Bank until he retired and joined the University of Toronto, said the bank is not on Mr Trump's radar.

"There's no executive director. And the American executive director has always been a leader of the board and the one who conveys the views of the American government," Mr Cadario told Agence France-Presse.

World Bank chief executive Kristalina Georgieva will serve as interim president upon Mr Kim's departure. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Observers said the appearance of Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He on the first day of what were supposed to be vice-ministerial-level talks was a clear sign of the importance the leadership was attaching to the talks. PHOTO: REUTERS



TV host sues F&B firm that took over his Thai eatery chain

Pornsak Prajakwit and his fellow co-founder allege deal breaches, business mismanagement



Selina Lum
Law Correspondent

Television host Pornsak Prajakwit and his business partner, who received \$2 for selling 60 per cent of their shares in the Thai restaurant chain they founded, are suing the food and beverage company that took over the business.

Mr Pornsak and Mr Foo Tuan How, who opened the first outlet of Porn's Sexy Thai Food in 2010, had agreed to give up their majority stake to Jus Delish Group in November 2016.

In court papers obtained by The Straits Times, the pair said they agreed to sell their shares for a nominal sum as Jus Delish had agreed to inject capital of \$400,000 to expand the business.

Past media reports had quoted parties in the deal saying that a seven-figure sum was involved.

The pair, each of whom now owns 20 per cent in Nine F&B, the company that owns the Porn's restaurants, have also sued Jus Delish directors Liow Tian Wah and Tan Bee Hong.

Mr Liow and Ms Tan took over as directors of Nine F&B following the sale.

At the time, there were four Porn's outlets – at Safran Mount Faber, Star Vista in Buona Vista, Alexandra Retail Centre and one in French Road operated by a franchisee.

Mr Pornsak and Mr Foo contend they are being oppressed as minority shareholders and want Jus Delish to buy them out at a fair value.

Jus Delish has countersued and argues it is entitled to rescind the deal and get back its investment.

In their lawsuit, Mr Pornsak and Mr Foo say they were told only in March last year that Nine F&B was heavily in debt.

They say they were given two options: sell their remaining shares to Jus Delish for \$1, or bear the losses according to the proportion of their shareholding.

They did not agree to either. They say they found discrepancies after going through the financial documents of Nine F&B.

Their lawyers from WongPartnership sent a letter to Jus Delish, alleging breaches of the sale and purchase agreement and the shareholders' agreement, and proposed that Jus Delish buy out the pair's shares, but there was no reply.

Mr Pornsak and Mr Foo say they learnt in August last year that all outlets were closed, except for the one in Star Vista.

Instead of expanding the business, the defendants mismanaged it, they say.

They allege Jus Delish failed to inject the promised funds or had withdrawn or misused most of them, a

claim that Jus Delish disputes.

Months after taking over, Jus Delish changed suppliers without consulting them. The pair claim this resulted in a drop in food quality and led to an increase in customers' complaints.

They say they were also not told why Nine F&B had been paying a monthly "management fee" of about \$8,000 to Jus Delish.

The defendants, represented by AsiaLegal, deny the allegations.

In court papers, they contend that they did inject \$400,000 into the business in May 2017.

They say they were unable to expand the business owing to the plaintiffs' delay in providing properly audited accounts and failure to transfer the Porn's trademark to Nine F&B.

The closures were beyond their control, they added. For instance, one landlord did not want to renew the lease.

They also contend that the change in suppliers was justified from a cost-savings standpoint because it consolidates their suppliers across the group's various brands.

The group also runs Thai restaurants Som Tam, Talay Kata and Gin Khao, as well as Kwan Inn Vegetarian outlets.

Jus Delish has countersued for damages and is also asking the court to declare both liable to pay it \$400,000 if Nine F&B is unable to pay the sum.

It is also claiming against Mr Pornsak for breaching his contract as brand ambassador.

Jus Delish alleges that when he was approached to appear at a number of events, he would redirect such queries to his agent and asked to be paid for such engagements, despite receiving a salary as brand ambassador.

TV host Pornsak Prajakwit and his business partner, who opened the first outlet of Porn's Sexy Thai Food in 2010, agreed to give up their majority stake to Jus Delish Group in November 2016, selling their shares for \$2 as Jus Delish had agreed to inject capital of \$400,000 to expand the business.

PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

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Left: Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah arriving at The Villa in the Singapore Botanic Gardens' Ginger Garden, where they had lunch (above) yesterday. The meeting shows there is political will on both sides to see through a resolution, said one observer. ST PHOTOS: DESMOND FOO

Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah also announced that both sides have agreed to set up a joint working group to study, discuss and de-escalate the maritime dispute.

Positive start to resolving disputes but observers flag challenges ahead

They will require compromises and that will pose difficulties to both countries, they say

Adrian Lim
Political Correspondent

Yesterday's meeting to address the ongoing bilateral airspace and maritime dispute was positive and constructive, the foreign ministers of Singapore and Malaysia said.

Observers concurred with this description of the discussion, but stressed the challenges ahead and noted it would take some time for officials to jointly resolve the issues.

Former Nominated MP Zulkifli Baharudin said the meeting showed there was political will on both sides, grounded on mutual interest, to see

through a resolution. But resolving the disputes would require compromises to be made, he noted, adding that this would be challenging.

Singapore and Malaysia agreed to immediately suspend – for at least a month – recent changes to aviation measures that have caused friction between both sides, adding that their transport ministers should meet soon to discuss the matters.

In particular, Malaysia has suspended a permanent restricted area it has imposed in the airspace over Pasir Gudang, while Singapore has put on hold new flight landing procedures put in place at Seletar Airport. Both changes took effect

earlier this month.

Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan and Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah also announced that both sides have agreed to set up a joint working group to study, discuss and de-escalate the maritime dispute.

It was sparked after Malaysia unilaterally extended its Johor Baru port limits on Oct 25 last year, encroaching on waters which Singapore regards as its own.

ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute fellow Norshahril Saat said it was a “good first step” that both parties would sit down and talk things through. “Diplomatic channels remain the best approach to solve the issues,” Dr Norshahril said.

But Associate Professor Alan Chong of the Centre for Multilateralism Studies, at the S. Rajaratnam

School of International Studies, said he was not sure the meeting was a breakthrough in resolving the disputes or if it would lead to a sustained period of calm.

“We have just agreed to de-escalate, which is a continuation of what both countries have said they would do back in December.”

Prof Chong noted that a working group gave hope to resolving the maritime dispute, but negotiations could be long-drawn. “Both sides can play the negotiating game to their advantage,” he added.

A more sanguine Dr Norshahril said that those involved in the working group were administrators with the technical capacity to understand the issues at hand. They also had the ability to reduce “red tape” and may even expedite the process of resolving the conflict, he added.

The working group will be headed by Singapore's permanent secretary for foreign affairs Chee Wee Kiong, and his counterpart, Malaysia's foreign ministry secretary-general Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob, and will comprise relevant senior officials from both sides.

ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute fellow Mustafa Izzuddin said the measures taken by both countries with regard to the airspace spat showed a “diplomatic reciprocity”. Both countries had chosen to look at the bigger picture of their bilateral relationship and to pave the way for face-to-face negotiations to take place in a more conducive setting, he said.

“The difference between the maritime and aviation dispute is that there is a bilateral agreement in place on aviation but not on maritime, and there is a higher possibil-

ity of an outright confrontation in the maritime waters than in the open skies,” said Dr Mustafa.

Singapore and Malaysia inked a bilateral agreement in 1974, for the Republic to provide air traffic control services in the airspace over southern Johor. It was thus easier for both parties to suspend new aviation policies each country had implemented, and the existing agreement can be reviewed in a way which could be amenable to both, said Dr Mustafa.

Observers said it remained to be seen how the disputes would play out. Mr Zulkifli said that while resolving the disputes would require compromises, each government would need to convince its people these were not a sign of weakness or “giving in”.

Dr Mustafa said resolutions were likely to be reached when both sides were content that their national interests had been preserved.

Said Prof Chong: “This could be a complex diplomatic game, in which (Malaysian) Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is creating bargaining chips for the future. He may be quite content to give Singapore the air and sea space, in exchange for Singapore's help on other matters next time.”

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Declaration of restricted area affects Seletar's flight path

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent

On Dec 25, the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) declared a permanent restricted area in the airspace over Pasir Gudang for the purpose of military activities.

The information was disseminated through a Notice to Airmen (Notam) – a notice that is filed to alert the global aviation community of potential hazards along a flight route or at a location that could affect the safety of flight. In its notice, the CAAM said the restriction would take effect from Jan 2.

What it meant was that flights from any country, including Malaysia, would need prior approval from the Royal Malaysian Air Force to operate in that zone between 2,000 and 5,000 feet.

The restricted zone was in the flight path for landing and take-off at Singapore's Seletar Airport, from the north.

It meant planes heading to and from Seletar would have to ensure that they avoid the stipulated area.

This can be done by going into an upward spiral soon after take-off to go over the 5,000 feet threshold and spiralling down when landing in Singapore, experts said.

While there are no commercial airlines that operate scheduled services to Seletar Airport, the restriction had affected private and chartered flights.

While it is not uncommon for countries to declare restricted air zones when they conduct military activities, this is usually done in areas where there are limited commercial flying activities, the experts pointed out.

There are also procedures and guidelines set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) on this. For example, countries

should first consult and give advance notice to key stakeholders.

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The new passenger terminal at Seletar Airport opened in November last year. ST FILE PHOTO

ILS – helping pilots to land safely even in bad weather

When Singapore decided to build a new and bigger passenger terminal at Seletar Airport – which opened in November – the plan was to intro-

duce an Instrument Landing System (ILS).

Such a system, installed at many other airports, uses ground instruments to help air traffic controllers guide pilots coming in for landing.

Without an ILS, pilots have to rely on just their vision, which means they cannot land in bad weather, for example.

Pilots typically prefer an ILS because it offers a more precise landing path, experts said.

Malaysia, however, protested and its carrier Firefly suspended all flights to Singapore from Dec 1, the day it was supposed to move its operations from Changi to Seletar Airport.

Malaysia claimed the new landing procedure would restrict developments at Pasir Gudang town which is near Seletar Airport.

Singapore has denied this, saying that the use of ILS at Seletar Airport does not change existing height limits.

The flight path and height limits are in accordance with safety and operational standards prescribed by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the Republic has said.

In objecting to the proposed ILS at Seletar Airport, Malaysia has also claimed that Pasir Gudang port will be subjected to higher risks.

Experts, though, have dismissed this, saying that for more than three decades, Singapore has safely managed the nexus between aircraft operations and ships transiting the Johor Strait to Pasir Gudang port.

Systems such as the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore Vessel Height Measuring System are in place to safeguard both aviation and maritime activities.

Flights get held back while tall vessels cross the Strait of Johor.

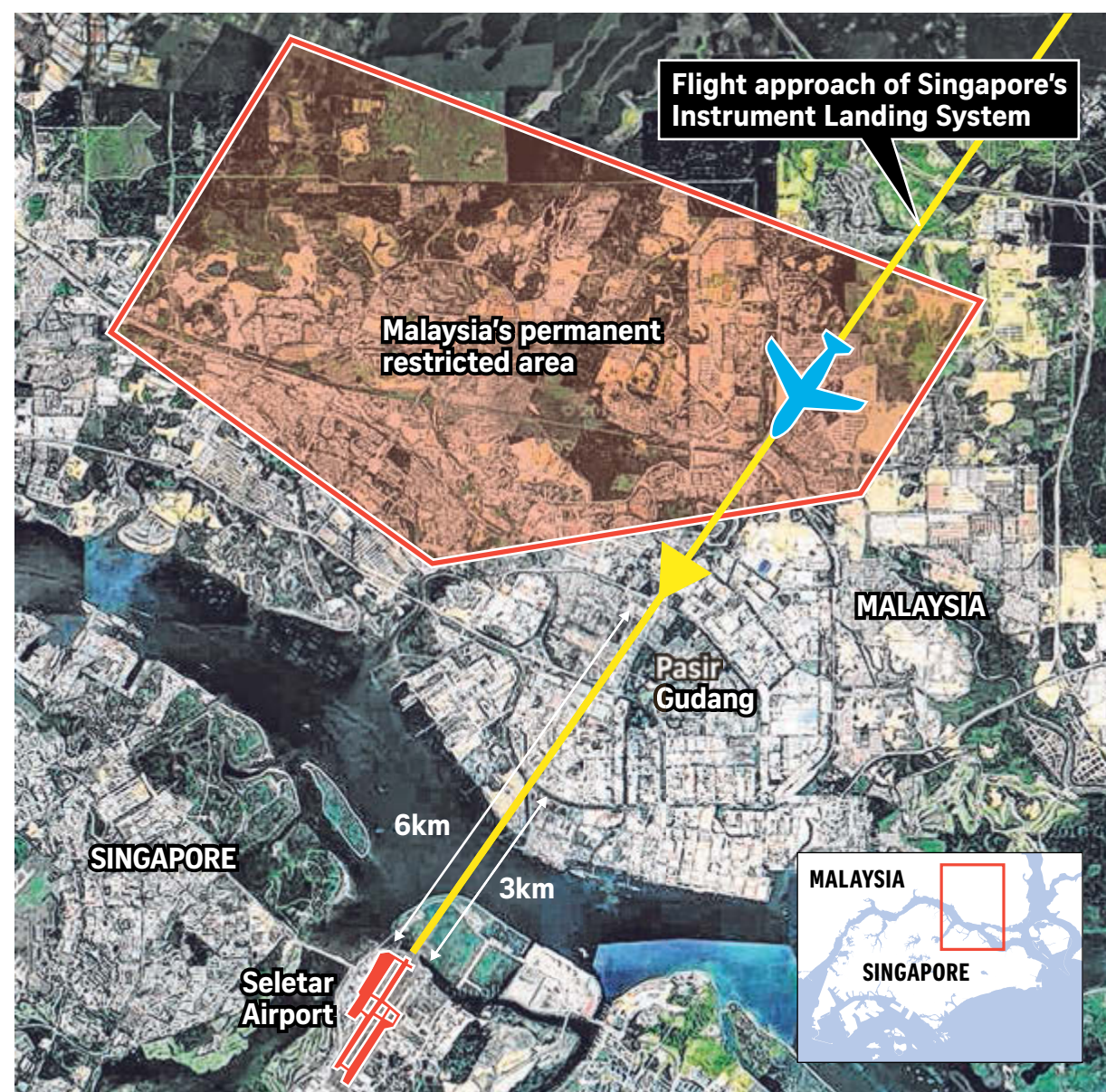


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Karamjit Kaur

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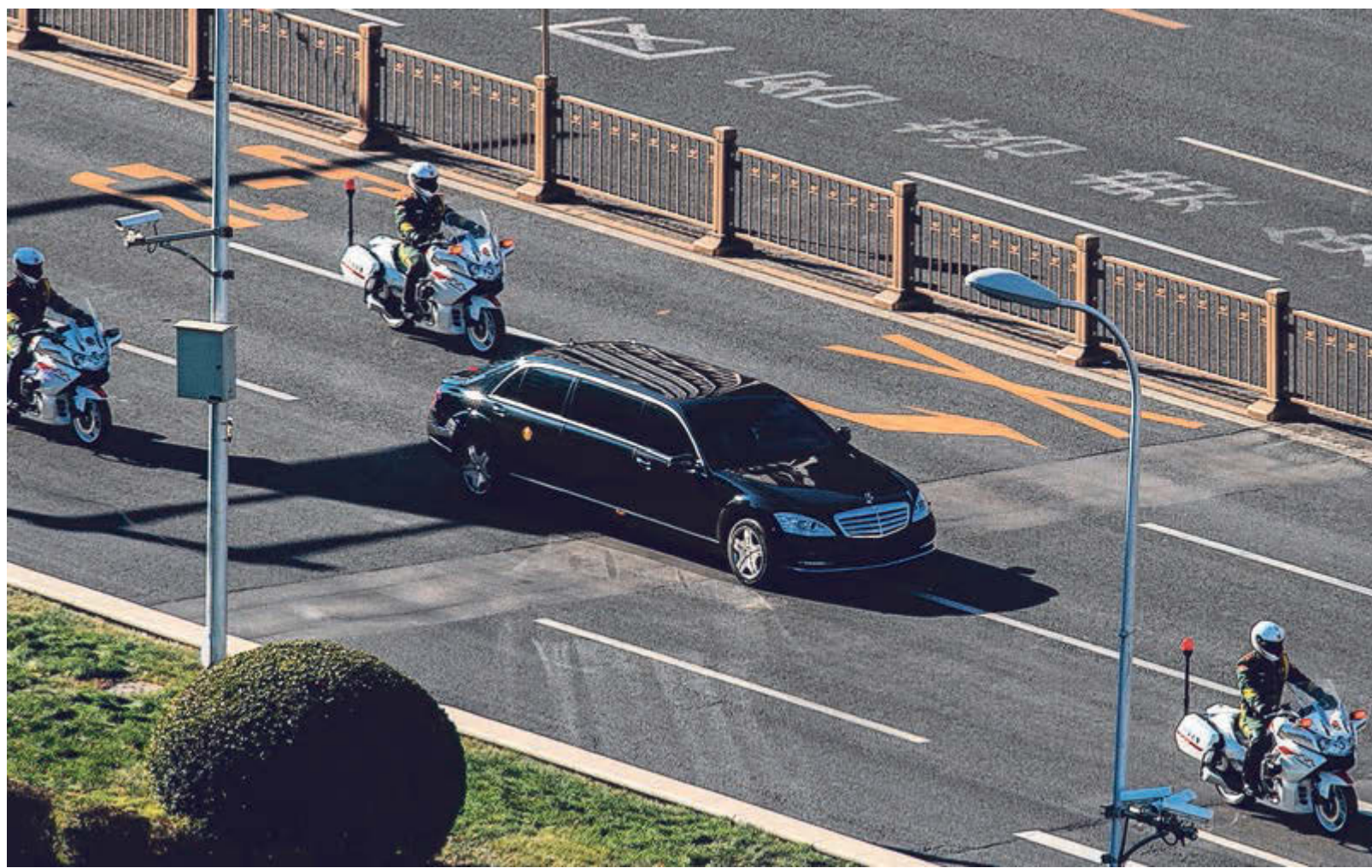


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North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's motorcade travelling through the streets of Beijing yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Kim makes surprise visit to Beijing

North Korean leader's meeting with Chinese President seen as another counsel-seeking mission

Tan Dawn Wei
China Bureau Chief
In Beijing

Just as unexpectedly as his last three trips to Beijing, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's armoured olive green train rolled into a railway station in the Chinese capital at 10.55am yesterday with little fanfare save for the motorcade that brought him to the Diaoyutai State Guest House.

The surprise visit, widely seen to be yet another counsel-seeking mission by Mr Kim in preparation for his anticipated second meeting with United States President Donald Trump, comes as US trade representatives are in town for talks aimed at resolving a trade dispute between the two economic giants that has rattled global markets for months.

In an unusual move, North Korean state media announced Mr Kim's visit yesterday morning before he, his wife and other senior officials even arrived in Beijing. Typically, Pyongyang makes public its leader's overseas trips only after he has returned home.

Yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang played down the significance of the visit, saying it was part of maintaining good bilateral relations between

North Korea and China, although he added that China supports continued talks between North Korea and the US.

"There will no doubt be an exchange of in-depth views on bilateral ties and regional and international issues of common concern," he said.

While he did not give away Mr Kim's itinerary, South Korea's Yonhap news agency cited sources as saying that the North Korean leader and Chinese President Xi Jinping met yesterday for an hour and discussed aligning their positions ahead of a likely second summit between Mr Kim and Mr Trump.

South Korea's spy agency, the National Intelligence Service, also reportedly told lawmakers in a closed-door briefing that the two leaders may discuss a peace treaty to replace the Korean War armistice. After the meeting, Mr Xi and his wife were believed to have hosted a welcome dinner for Mr Kim and his wife at the Great Hall of the People, reported Yonhap, which also said the North Korean leader was expected to visit industrial facilities in the north-eastern port city of Tianjin during his three-day visit.

South Korea yesterday welcomed Mr Kim's trip to China with a statement from the Blue House, the presidential palace, saying it will be a "stepping stone towards a second North-US summit".

The latest visit came at the invitation of President Xi and coincided with what was believed to be Mr Kim's 35th birthday yesterday. The

meeting with Mr Xi marked the fourth time Mr Kim has met the Chinese leader in less than a year and has fuelled talk that another face-to-face encounter with Mr Trump is imminent.

Mr Kim had just a week ago indicated his willingness to sit down with the US leader again, although he also warned of taking a "new path" if the US does not ease sanctions.

Last year, he called on the Chinese President ahead of historic meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the demilitarised zone on their joint border and Mr Trump in Singapore, which resulted in a promise by Mr Kim to work towards denuclearisation.

He went to Beijing again after the Singapore summit to brief Mr Xi and discuss economic cooperation. China, which is North Korea's most important ally, has been providing a lifeline to the isolated nation amid tough United Nations sanctions that have crippled its economy.

Dr Shin Chang-hoon, senior research fellow at the Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy, said Mr Kim "shows his inclination towards China whenever a significant decision is awaiting". But Dr Shin also said that Mr Xi may not be as supportive this time around, given China's delicate position in the trade negotiations with the US.

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Additional reporting by Chang May Choon in Seoul

News analysis

North Korean leader's visit preludes likely Trump-Kim summit; China's role crucial

Chang May Choon
South Korea Correspondent
In Seoul

Nirmal Ghosh
US Bureau Chief
In Washington

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's latest visit to China is a prelude to his likely second summit with US President Donald Trump, with Beijing playing a pivotal role in nudging Pyongyang towards denuclearisation, say experts.

Mr Kim met Chinese President Xi Jinping last year before his encounters with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in April and Mr Trump in June in Singapore.

"If the pattern of Chairman Kim reinforcing strategic communication with Xi Jinping first remains the same, it is highly likely that he will visit Seoul or hold the second US-North Korea summit in early or mid-February," said Sejong Institute analyst Cheong Seong-chang.

Mr Kim arrived in Beijing yesterday amid intense speculation that his second summit with Mr Trump is in the works, after months of stalled talks over the nuclear issue. The US leader himself said on Sunday that negotiations were under way for a location and that the outcome would be announced "in the not-too-distant future".

The White House has already scouted sites in Bangkok, Hanoi and Hawaii, CNN reported yesterday.

While both sides will benefit from ongoing dialogue, talks have stalled over the US insistence that North Korea take concrete steps towards denuclearisation, such as submitting a list of its nuclear weapons, while Pyongyang is pushing for "corresponding measures" like sanctions relief.

"Having a second summit supports a narrative that President Trump considers critical to his legitimacy as a businessman and politician: that he is a great dealmaker, and that we've seen success with North Korea because of his personal diplomacy. Continuing summit diplomacy with North Korea is central to that," said Mr Mintaro Oba, a former State Department official who has worked on North Korea. Sustaining dialogue can also elevate Mr Kim's stature as a leader and "maximise his diplomatic options, likely without making many substantive concessions", he said.

However, some analysts warn that a second summit may not happen unless North Korea is prepared to accede to US demands.

Pyongyang has been exerting pressure on both Washington and Seoul, demanding reciprocal moves from the US for all that it has done so far, including the dismantling of its key nuclear test site. But the US maintains that sanctions and pressure will remain on the North until complete denuclearisation.

While the first Trump-Kim meeting was more optics than substance, Dr Shin Chang-hoon from the Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy said the second one must "show materialised progress" as the hope of re-election for the US President in 2020 depends on it. Mr Trump will not want to "take all the responsibility or risk if there's no progress".

Experts note there are no signals that either side is willing to back down.

Unless either or both countries take a more flexible and creative approach, the results of a second summit will be "largely cosmetic and serve mainly to preserve momentum behind the current diplomatic process", said Mr Oba.

Dr Denny Roy, a senior fellow at the East West Centre in Honolulu, was also pessimistic about a positive outcome from a second Trump-Kim summit. The most likely result would be "each government again claiming a victorious breakthrough, with little if any substantive change in the factors that created the crisis except Trump dropping the threat to take preventive military action against North Korea", he told ST.

Mr Kim's visit to China - North Korea's only ally and economic lifeline - could be the key to unlocking the nuclear deadlock.

Signs have already emerged that a stronger alliance with China could be the "new path" that Mr Kim hinted at in his New Year's address. Some reports said he may seek sanctions relief from China, but Mr Xi, under pressure from the US over a trade war, may not oblige.

If China wants to placate the US, it may "utilise the occasion to nudge Kim to be more forthcoming in denuclearisation steps as a diplomatic favour to Washington", said Dr Lee Seong-hyon, director of Sejong Institute's Centre for Chinese Studies. This could be seen as China's goodwill gesture in working with the US on North Korea's nuclear issue, he added.

But there is also a chance that Mr Kim is using China as "diplomatic insurance against the US", said Dr Lee. "Trump, Xi, Kim - they are all dealmakers. We'll see who is the shrewdest one among them."

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Donations bring warmth to China's Snowflake Boy

Kua Yu-Lin

Chinese schoolboy Wang Fuman first shot to fame early last year, when a photo of him with his hair and eyebrows covered in icicles went viral on the Internet.

Wearing only thin clothing, the then eight-year-old Fuman walked for an hour in sub-zero temperatures from his home in an impoverished county in south-west China's Yunnan province to his school, Zhuanshanbao Primary School, 4.5km away.

His teacher took pictures of him and shared them on social media, earning Fuman the nickname "Ice Boy" or "Snowflake Boy" in the Chinese media.

The photos also showed his frost-bitten hands, which had turned dry and wrinkly.

His story drew national and international attention to the plight of at least 61 million "left-behind" children of migrant workers living in poverty in China.

One year later, thanks to donations and government aid, Fuman and his family have moved out from an old mud hut into a new house just a 10-minute walk from school, People's Daily reported.

"Our lives will get better and better from now on," the boy's father, Mr Wang Gangkui, said.



Volunteers having a wifie taken with Wang Fuman. Thanks to donations and government aid, the boy and his family have moved out from an old mud hut into a new house just a 10-minute walk from school. PHOTO: CHINA DAILY

"Compared with the mud walls and muddy roads in the past, we are better sheltered from the wind and rain now," he added.

Mr Wang now works as an electric welder at a construction site owned by China Construction Third Engineering Bureau in Yunnan's capital city, Kunming. He earns about 200 yuan (S\$40) a day.

According to People's Daily, the primary school has also been equipped with heating and new teaching facilities such as a science laboratory, an art room and a computer room, where pupils have ac-

cess to digital textbooks.

Pupils who live farther away from school can stay at a newly built dormitory, where thick quilts and medicine to ease frostbite are provided.

"Fuman's overall grades rank in the top five of his class and he gets along well with his classmates," vice-principal Fu Heng told People's Daily.

Fuman, now nine, never misses a day of school and dreams of becoming a police officer one day.

During a government-sponsored trip to Beijing last year, he was

given a tour of the Swat team's headquarters and sat in on a class at his dream school - the People's Public Security University of China, the country's top police academy.

When asked about the media attention, he seemed unaffected and said he prefers to be called by his real name rather than "Snowflake Boy".

"I just want to study as hard as I can so I can become a real policeman and take down bad people in the world," he told China Daily.

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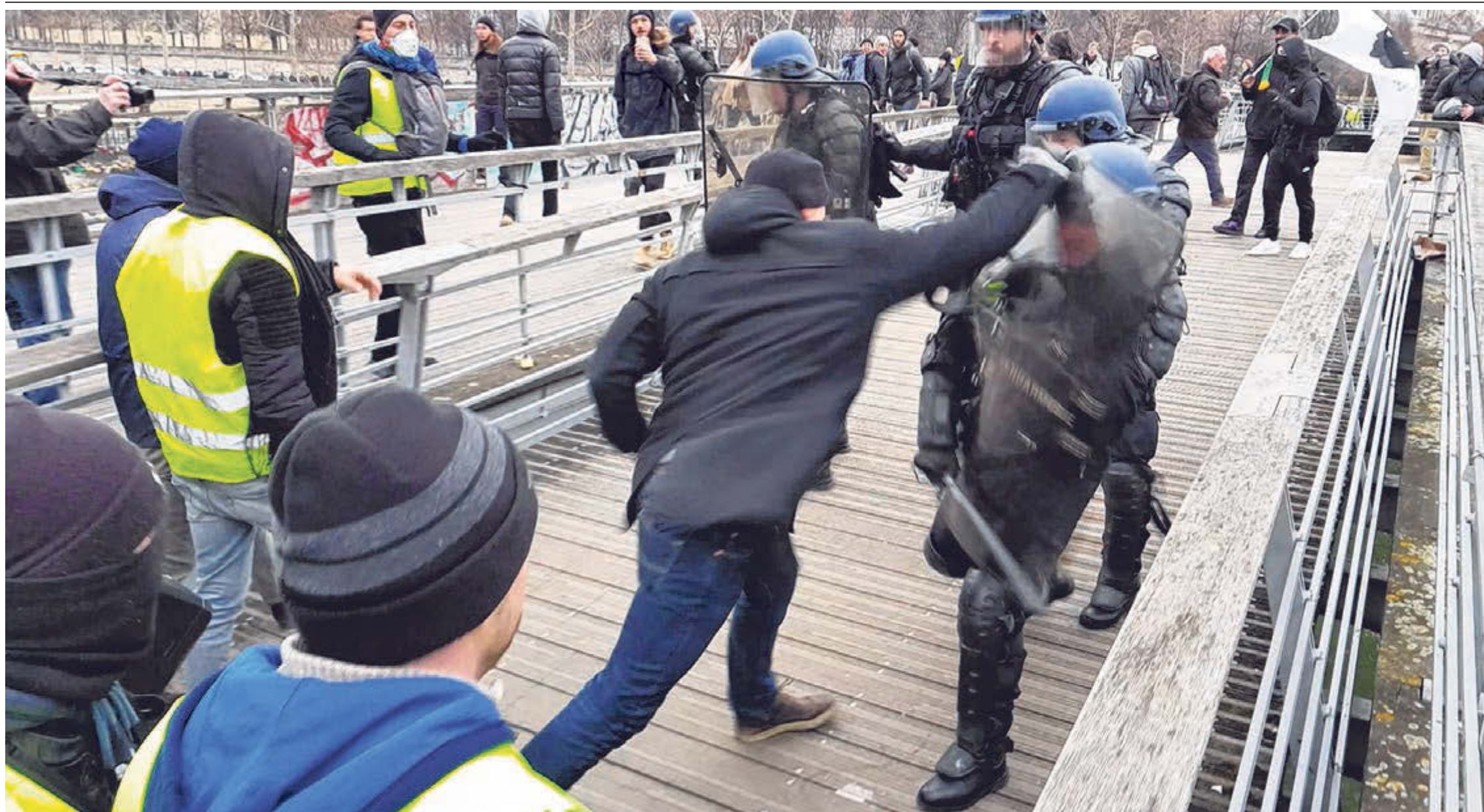
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The police have at times appeared defenceless, with former heavyweight fighter Christophe Dettinger filmed landing blows on officers guarding a bridge leading to the National Assembly in Paris last Saturday. Mr Dettinger surrendered to the police the next day. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

France to crack down on unauthorised protests

Tough line comes amid violent 'yellow vest' protests; troublemakers may have to pay for damage caused

PARIS • French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe has announced plans to ban participation in unauthorised protests as the government scrambles to try to end weeks of violent "yellow vest" rallies.

Seven weeks into a rebellion marked by weekly clashes in Paris and other French cities, Mr Philippe on Monday said the government would introduce a "new law punishing those who do not respect the requirement to declare (protests), those who take part in unauthorised demonstrations and those who arrive at demonstrations wearing face masks".

He also announced plans to ban known "troublemakers" from taking part in protests, in the same way known football hooligans have

been banned from stadiums before.

In future, Mr Philippe said, the onus would be on "the troublemakers, and not taxpayers, to pay for the damage caused" to businesses and property during the protests which began peacefully in mid-November over taxes but quickly became more radical.

Many of the "yellow vest" demonstrators are demanding that centrist President Emmanuel Macron resign, a call dismissed as undemocratic by the government.

Last Saturday, protesters used a construction vehicle to smash open the doors of the building housing the ministry of government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux.

In other scenes that caused shock, a former professional boxer



HEED THIS

Those who question our institutions will not have the last word.



**FRENCH PRIME MINISTER
EDOUARD PHILIPPE**

was caught on camera beating up police officers.

"Those who question our institutions will not have the last word," Mr Philippe said, announcing plans to deploy 80,000 security force members nationwide.

The images of renewed violence and destruction in Paris last Saturday underscored the difficulty of containing a leaderless movement that appeared to be petering out at the end of last year but has since gained new momentum.

Around 50,000 "yellow vests" marched again last Saturday to denounce Mr Macron's policies, call for his resignation or demand more of a say in national law-making.

The police at times appeared defenceless, with former heavyweight fighter Christophe Dettinger filmed landing blows on officers guarding a bridge leading to the National Assembly.

Mr Dettinger, known in the ring

as "The Gypsy From Massy", a town near Paris, gave himself up to the police in the capital on Monday.

In a video posted on YouTube on Sunday, he described himself as an "ordinary citizen" acting out of anger over what he called the repressive tactics of the police.

"I am a yellow vest. I have the anger of the people in me," he said.

Images of a policeman beating several protesters in the southern city of Toulon last Saturday have also been widely condemned.

The police officer – a commander who was granted France's highest award, the Legion d'Honneur, on Jan 1 – was referred to investigators after appearing to punch one protester in the face several times.

Police signalled a stricter approach last week when they arrested a protest leader, truck driver Eric Drouet, for failing to notify the authorities about a demonstration.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

News analysis

Macron's dialogue offer unlikely to engage protest leaders



Jonathan Eyal

Global Affairs Correspondent
In London

In an effort to put an end to a wave of violent protests which has plagued his nation over the past two months, French President Emmanuel Macron has offered to engage ordinary voters in a vast national public debate over the country's future economic and social priorities.

"I believe deeply that the big debate is the best way to bring French people back together and

bring them back to the negotiating table," Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire – a close Macron associate – told the local media. The demonstrators, he claimed, "are only a minority, yet it is the majority that ultimately decides".

However, critics have dismissed Mr Macron's offer of a national debate as merely a publicity gimmick. And quite a number of French politicians doubt the wisdom of a move which only seems to strengthen the hand of those who shout the loudest.

The current wave of protests started last November and was initially sparked by the French government's decision to increase fuel prices as part of the country's environmental plans.

That infuriated people in the countryside, who rely on cars to commute in rural areas, where public transport is almost non-existent and jobs scarce. They

turned out to march, wearing the yellow high-visibility vests that French motorists are obliged to carry in their cars.

Protests by the "gilets jaunes" or "yellow vests", as they came to be known, have been held every Saturday since then. But although the number of participants appeared to be declining by the end of last year, latest figures indicate a sudden surge. Interior Ministry statistics showed only 32,000 demonstrators during the Christmas-New Year period, but more than 50,000 were on the streets last Saturday.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner derided the significance of the figures, saying: "50,000, that's a little more than one person per municipality in France."

Still, many of last Saturday's demonstrators bypassed police cordons to hit government buildings in Paris, while regional

big cities such as Bordeaux, Nantes and Toulouse suffered considerable disruption as well.

More worrying for the government is that opinion polls show that the "yellow vests" continue to enjoy broad public support. And although both extreme left and extreme right politicians in France have tried to benefit from this movement, the protest organisers have maintained their distance from party politics and are, therefore, seen as the authentic public voice.

Mr Macron has already made a number of concessions, such as cancelling the fuel tax rise and increasing minimum wages. These are not trivial measures, since they will end up costing the French Treasury around €10 billion (\$\$15.5 billion) annually and mean that France will miss its target of reducing its budget deficit.

But, with the protests continuing, Mr Macron is now touting his idea of a national dialogue as a way out of the current ferment. In theory, the public discussions, whose precise format will be decided at a Cabinet meeting in Paris today, but which will be conducted by every local mayor and municipality starting from next week, are intended to cover every topic – from national finances to the organisation of public services and

Mr Macron may be playing for time, in the hope that the crisis could pass; while offering dialogue, his government also announced tough new measures to prosecute the so-called "casseurs" or "smashers", the demonstrators who resort to violence against public property.

questions of citizenship.

Ministers are rushing to limit the scope of the debate by specifying that certain reform priorities on which Mr Macron won power during his electoral campaign in 2017 are not to be questioned.

These appear to include a decision to abolish a personal wealth tax which Mr Macron touted as an effort to make France more business-friendly. Leaders of the "yellow vests" want that tax reinstated and over two-thirds of the electorate support their stance, according to the latest opinion polls. But Finance Minister Le Maire ruled out the revival of the

wealth tax or changes to any other revenue-raising measures.

The risk for Mr Macron is that his public debate initiative will be seen as a pointless exercise.

"Will the debate touch on the wage freeze now operating in the economy? Of course not", said Mr Francois Hommeril, leader of the CFE-CGC trade union, which represents middle management and professionals. "This debate is an avoidance strategy," he added in comments to Les Echos, France's financial daily.

Mr Macron may be playing for time, in the hope that the crisis could pass; while offering dialogue, his government also announced tough new measures to prosecute the so-called "casseurs" or "smashers", the demonstrators who resort to violence against public property.

Police numbers will be boosted – 80,000 will be deployed throughout France in the coming weekend, with 5,000 in Paris, a substantial increase on previous deployments.

But there is no question that Mr Macron's reputation has suffered badly. The man who only a year ago was hailed as Europe's saviour now enjoys the support of only one in four of his own countrymen.

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I have always acted with integrity, Ghosn tells court

Nissan's ex-chief, in first court appearance since detention, says he's innocent of charges

Walter Sim
Japan Correspondent
In Tokyo

Carlos Ghosn, the auto industry titan accused of financial misconduct, protested his innocence yesterday in his first court appearance following 50 days in detention.

The former Nissan chairman, reading from a statement in English, told the Tokyo District Court: "I am innocent of the accusations... against me. I have always acted with integrity and have never been accused of any wrongdoing in my several-decade professional career."

"I have been wrongly accused and unfairly detained based on... unsubstantiated accusations."

Ghosn, 64, was first arrested on Nov 19 on the tarmac of Tokyo's Haneda Airport for allegedly understating his salary by 5 billion yen (\$63 million) over a five-year period ending March 2015.

He was served two more warrants: one on Dec 10 for the alleged under-reporting of his compensation by another 4 billion yen over the next three years ending March 2018; and the other on Dec 21 for suspected aggravated breach of trust for allegedly transferring obligations on his personal investment losses to Nissan.

His detention is slated to expire on Friday, at which point prosecutors must decide whether to indict him for aggravated breach of trust.

Ghosn, who was sacked by Nissan and has been charged with financial misconduct, may be allowed to apply for bail, but may also be served new arrest warrants.

The case has drawn massive public attention, with 1,122 people standing in line yesterday for the 14 public gallery seats available.

Ghosn appeared visibly thinner in court, with his hair greying, dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and sandals. He was led into court in handcuffs and with a rope around his waist.

Yesterday's hearing was called at the request of Ghosn's lawyers, who argued that there are no grounds for his lengthy detention. But presiding Judge Yuichi Tada said the evidence before the court showed there might be "reasonable grounds to believe the allegations".

The judge added that detention was necessary as Ghosn presented a flight risk, while there was also a chance that he may contact people to destroy evidence.

Ghosn has had rock-star status in Japan, due to his pulling Nissan back from the brink of collapse after he joined the company, first as chief operating officer in 1999, when he instituted drastic reforms.

He told the court yesterday that he had wanted to be paid in US dollars, but was told by Nissan that this was not possible and that he had to be paid in Japanese yen.

It was due to his concerns over the yen's volatility against the US dollar that he entered into foreign exchange contracts, he said, but the financial crisis in 2008 caused Nissan's shares to plummet by more than 80 per cent from their peak.

With the bank asking for more collateral, it meant the "stark choices" of either resigning and getting his retirement pay, or asking Nissan to temporarily take on the collateral so long as it did not come at any cost to the company.

"A captain doesn't jump ship in the middle of a storm," he said. His lawyer, Mr Motonari Otsuru, a former chief of special investigations at the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office, said there was a paper trail detailing this agreement.

A sum of US\$14.7 million (\$20 million) that was paid to Saudi tycoon Khaled Juffali is also under scrutiny, but Ghosn said this was for work done to help Nissan restructure in the Middle East.

Further, on the under-reporting of his pay on financial documents, prosecutors allege that Ghosn had deliberately deferred his compensation until retirement, possibly to avoid flak over his hefty salary.

To this, Ghosn said: "I never received any compensation from Nissan that was not disclosed, nor did I ever enter into any binding contract with Nissan to be paid a fixed amount that was not disclosed." He added that draft proposals would have been reviewed by lawyers.

Japan's criminal justice system, which has a conviction rate of over 99 per cent, has come under the

spotlight with the prolonged detention – a manoeuvre that defence lawyers have criticised as a "way of taking hostage". Mr Otsuru said at a news conference that bail for his client is unlikely before the first trial hearing, were Ghosn to be

charged with aggravated breach of trust. This could be six months from now, he added.

Amid speculation of a rebellion in the ranks of Nissan, given the drip-feed of leaks to the media that appear to be intended to tar his name in the court of public opinion, Ghosn yesterday nonetheless said that he has a "genuine love and appreciation for Nissan".

"I believe strongly that in all of

my efforts on behalf of the company, I have acted honourably, legally, and with the knowledge and approval of the appropriate executives inside the company – with the sole purpose of supporting and strengthening Nissan and helping to restore its place as one of Japan's finest and most respected companies," he added.

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Pedestrians watching a news clip featuring ousted Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn during his court appearance in Tokyo yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

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Oil tanker fire in HK waters kills one

HONG KONG • An oil tanker caught fire in Hong Kong's southern waters yesterday, killing one crew member and injuring four others, police said, with witnesses reporting a loud blast that shook windows several kilometres away.

The vessel, carrying oil and chemicals, caught fire in the late morning about one nautical mile south of Lamma Island.

Of the 26 people on board the Aulac Fortune, one man was found dead at the scene, while 23 were rescued from the sea. Two people remain missing.

Twenty-five of the crew members are Vietnamese, with the remaining one a Singaporean, who was slightly injured, according to the authorities.

Fire department commander Yiu Men Yeung said the ship was about to be refuelled by an oil barge when the accident occurred. He told reporters that the crew on the barge were "connecting the hoses for refuelling for the oil tanker, and then there were three explosions", before the ship burst into flames.

Ship tracking data shows the Vietnamese-flagged Aulac Fortune last loaded 6,000 tonnes of petrol, most of which had been delivered to Guangzhou between Sunday and Monday. The tanker later arrived south of Lamma Island and sent its position from there yesterday.

Residents of the nearby island of Lantau said they heard a big blast



- Ship tracking data shows the Aulac Fortune last loaded 6,000 tonnes of petrol, most of which had been delivered to Guangzhou by Monday.
- The tanker later arrived south of Lamma Island and sent its position from there at 1pm (Singapore time) yesterday.

Source: AFP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

which rattled doors and windows. "It felt like when there is a strong typhoon, when the wind shakes your doors violently," said Ms Rhea Nee.

REUTERS, XINHUA, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



The Aulac Fortune in the waters off Hong Kong yesterday. The vessel, carrying oil and chemicals, caught fire in the late morning about one nautical mile south of Lamma Island. Of the 26 people on board, one man was found dead at the scene, while 23 were rescued from the sea. Two people remain missing. PHOTO: REUTERS

Workers face action for insulting Malaysia royalty

PETALING JAYA • Malaysian consultancy firm Pemandu Associates has suspended an employee who allegedly posted remarks laced with profanity against the monarchy on social media.

Pemandu said yesterday that it was taking the issue seriously,

adding that an internal inquiry was being conducted.

"Pemandu Associates has suspended an employee with immediate effect regarding a tweet allegedly posted by the individual in reference to the royalty," it said in a statement posted on Facebook.



Sultan Muhammad V abdicated as King of Malaysia on Sunday.

Malaysians had bombarded Pemandu's Facebook page with a screenshot of the disparaging remark, urging the firm to take action against the employee.

The firm's statement came the same day that tech company Cisco Asean decided to sack an employee for insulting the Malaysian king on Facebook, after mounting public pressure.

"Cisco firmly believes in respecting and honouring local Malaysian traditions and laws. The remark was made by the employee in his personal capacity and does not represent Cisco's views," the company said in a statement on its Facebook page. "We deeply regret any distress caused and apologise. The employee has also issued an apology and is no longer with the company," Cisco added.

Power utility Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) took similar action yesterday, suspending its employee over a remark she allegedly made against the monarch on Twitter after its Facebook site was bombarded with messages from the public to terminate her employment.

The companies' responses came in the wake of Sunday's announcement by Kelantan ruler, Sultan Muhammad V, that he was stepping down as Malaysia's King.

Neither the palace nor the Prime Minister's Office has given a reason for the sudden abdication of the 49-year-old monarch after just two years on the throne – three years short of the usual five-year tenure.

Under Malaysia's unique five-year rotation system involving the nine royal Malay houses, the next in line to be king is Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang. The 88-year-old ruler is followed by Sultan Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, 60, of Johor, and Sultan Nazrin Shah, 62, from Perak.

The Conference of Rulers – which includes the nine sultans – will hold a special meeting on Jan 24 to choose a new king.

The Keeper of the Rulers' Seal yesterday said the new king will take his oath of office on Jan 31, allowing him to carry out his duties immediately, even before being installed ceremonially.

THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

KL looks into claim that China offered to block 1MDB probe

Najib's govt offered stakes in infrastructure projects in return for Beijing's help: WSJ report

Malaysia is looking into allegations that China had offered to help deter probes into 1Malaysia Development Berhad in exchange for infrastructure projects, after the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) reported that senior Chinese leaders offered to help bail out the troubled state fund in 2016.

The government is unaware of the discussions detailed in the WSJ report, which cited minutes from meetings the newspaper reviewed, and is examining the matter, said Finance Minister Lim Guan Eng yesterday. The cost of China-backed projects was certainly enlarged and Malaysia will check whether that was due to 1MDB links, Mr Lim said. "But I have to refer back to see if there are details or things explicitly said," Mr Lim added, saying that the government is looking through records. "If this is said, this is something we will pursue."

Chinese officials told visiting Malaysians that China would use its influence to try and get the US and other countries to drop probes into allegations that allies of then Prime Minister Najib Razak and others had plundered the fund, according to the WSJ. In return, Malaysia had offered stakes in railway and pipeline projects as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

The minutes state that the projects were to be presented as market-driven initiatives, even though their real purposes were to shore up Najib's government, settle 1MDB debts and deepen Chinese influence in Malaysia.

The Chinese government information office did not respond to requests for comment, the WSJ said, adding that China's Foreign Ministry had earlier denied that money in the programme was used to help bail out the 1MDB fund.

"Both China and Malaysia are co-operating on certain projects," China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters in Beijing yesterday, saying he was not

aware of the WSJ report. "We also maintain close communication and sound cooperation with the new Malaysian administration."

In a Facebook post yesterday, Najib denied the allegations, saying that Beijing had never offered to bail out the state investment firm.

Malaysia's government will ensure that all its dealings are based on transparency and accountability, Minister of Economic Affairs Azmin Ali told reporters yesterday, saying he was unaware of what was reported by the WSJ. The Malaysian Cabinet was never informed that the China deals were linked to bailing out 1MDB, former youth and sports minister Khairy Jamaluddin said on Twitter. Any such agreements would have been made without Cabinet approval, he said.

1MDB is at the centre of a global scandal involving claims of embezzlement and money laundering, with jurisdictions from the US, Malaysia and Singapore probing cases related to the fund. Najib has been charged with dozens of counts of corruption, criminal breach of trust and money laundering involving 1MDB-related monies.

He has denied wrongdoing and pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Malaysia's current government, which toppled Najib from power in a shock election victory last May, has halted billion-dollar projects backed by China. The list includes the Sabah gas pipeline project awarded to China Petroleum Pipeline Bureau and overseen by Suria Strategic Energy Resources, which has had its office raided by the anti-graft agency, and the RM81 billion (\$27 billion) East Coast Rail Link.

China also offered to bug the homes and offices of WSJ reporters in Hong Kong who were investigating 1MDB, to learn who was leaking information to them, the report said. It could not be determined whether China provided any such information, the WSJ added. BLOOMBERG

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Myanmar state ‘centre of global meth trade’

Report warns export of drugs from Shan state will be easier with economic corridor project

Nirmal Ghosh
US Bureau Chief
In Washington

Myanmar’s Shan state is the epicentre of the global methamphetamine supply and the export of the illegal drug is about to get even easier, warns a new report from the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG).

In Shan state, a centre of conflict and illicit drug production since 1950, the trade in heroin and methamphetamine tablets is controlled partly by Myanmar’s army, the Tatmadaw, and partly by multiple armed militias, some with the patronage of the Tatmadaw.

“Good infrastructure, proximity to precursor supplies from China and safe haven provided by pro-government militias and in rebel-held enclaves have also made it a major global source of high purity crystal meth,” says the report titled Fire And Ice: Conflict And Drugs In Myanmar’s Shan State.

The report is only the latest in a string of studies and warnings in recent years, over the proliferation of meth from Shan state, whose drug industry has seen only growth.

There have been record seizures of meth in the last two years beyond the immediate region – 1.2 tonnes in Western Australia, 0.9 tonnes in Melbourne, 1.6 tonnes in Indonesia, 1.2 tonnes in Malaysia.

Experts estimate seizure rates at below 10 per cent of total trade, suggesting a total annual production significantly in excess of 250 tonnes, the ICG says. In the Mekong sub-region, the trade’s total value is estimated at over US\$40 billion (S\$54 billion) a year.

The report says: “Despite massive seizures, prices of crystal meth have remained stable, a clear indication that they are a small proportion of total volumes.”

And the industry will gain momentum after the recently inked multibillion-dollar China-Myanmar Economic corridor, which will lead to better roads and a high-speed rail from Kunming, Yunnan, to Kyaukpadaung on the Rakhine state seaboard linking south China to the Bay of Bengal. “In the recent history of the Golden Triangle, increased trade and improved infrastructure have expanded rather than narrowed opportunities for illicit profiteering,” the report says.

The trade in ice, along with amphetamine tablets and heroin, has become so large and profitable that it dwarfs the formal economy of Shan state, fuels criminality and corruption and hinders efforts to end the state’s long-running ethnic conflicts, the report says.

In January last year, Myanmar police raided an abandoned house in northern Shan state, seizing meth pills, heroin and caffeine powder worth an estimated US\$54 million

Key locations and trade routes



NOTE: Cross-border arrows represent country-to-country flows of drugs and precursors; they do not denote specific border crossing points. The presence or absence of a particular armed group on this map does not imply involvement or not in the drug trade. *Also known as the ‘Mongla Group’, after the town where it has its headquarters.

Source: INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

at domestic prices.

The site was not far from the main road to the Chinese border at Muse – a major overland trade route. That the place was “abandoned” strongly suggests those using it were tipped off, the ICG says. The militia which controls the area has maintained a ceasefire with the Tatmadaw for nearly 28 years. The status of militia and border guard forces aligned with the Tatmadaw gives them considerable impunity, and gives the Tatmadaw a degree of deniability.

The authorities in countries in the region are often part of the corruption chain. China, where most chemicals needed to make meth come from, has almost never intercepted shipments crossing its border with Myanmar, the report says.

While ICG has urged Myanmar to redouble its drug control and anti-graft efforts as well as pursue a com-

prehensive peace settlement for the state, this is easier said than done. There is little incentive not to make and sell drugs, analysts say.

“The recommendation calling for the Tatmadaw to reform relations with militias and border guard forces, and eventually seeing them disbanded, is pretty ambitious,” Mr Jeremy Douglas, Bangkok-based regional representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, tells The Straits Times.

“For related reforms to be successful, they would need to be accompanied by incentives significant enough that groups would cease involvement in the illicit economy,” he says, adding: “I can’t think of what could be offered in the near term that would replace such massive revenue streams.”

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Social media posts showing the paused video clip featuring the preferred haircut (left) and the end-result. PHOTOS: WEIBO

Pause for effect: Man’s haircut a shear sensation

Ng Huiwen

A Chinese man hoping for a trendy hairdo got what he wanted – and a little more – after showing his hairstylist a paused video clip with a “play” button on it.

The man, whose identity is not known, was left with two shaven triangular patches on his head, according to photos that have since gone viral on Chinese social media platforms.

Chinese entertainment blogger Tian Xiu Bot, who first posted about the incident on micro-blogging site Weibo on Dec 30, said the man was watching a video at the salon when a model sporting the perfect trim appeared in it.

Hoping to look as stylish as the model, the man paused the video and showed it to the hairstylist, without noticing that the triangle “play” sign was on the screen. When he was asked if he wanted to keep the “triangle” too, the man said “yes” without thinking too much about the question.

The Weibo post has since received more than 78,000 likes and nearly 20,000 comments.

According to British news site Daily Mail, the man appeared to be pleased with his new haircut, and was even seen strutting across the room in a video clip.

Many Weibo users were amused by the hairstylist’s earnest attempt at recreating the look, down to the smallest details.

One user left a comment, saying: “There are not many meticulous hairstylists like him around.”

Another user said: “Actually, that is a rather handsome look. It could be a new trending haircut.”

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Father of Saudi asylum seeker wants to meet her

But Thai authorities say he and brother of the teen, who says family wants to kill her, must await UN approval

BANGKOK • The father of a Saudi teenager who fled to Thailand, fearing her family will kill her, has arrived in Bangkok and wants to meet his daughter, Thailand's immigration chief said yesterday.

But the father and brother of Ms Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun, 18, will have to wait and see whether the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) will allow them to see her, according to Police Lieutenant-General Surachate Hakpan, the Thai immigration chief.

He told reporters: "The father and brother want to go and talk to Rahaf, but the UN will need to approve that."

The UN refugee agency yesterday said it was investigating the teenager's case after she fled to Thailand saying she feared her family would kill her if she were sent back to Saudi Arabia, for renouncing Islam.

Activists are concerned about what Riyadh will do after Bangkok reversed a decision to expel her and allowed Ms Qunun – who is seeking asylum – to enter the country under the UNHCR's care.

Mr Phil Robertson, Human Rights Watch's deputy director for Asia, said: "The father is now here in Thailand and that's a source of concern. We have no idea what he



Ms Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun is in Bangkok while the UNHCR processes her application for refugee status.

is going to do... and whether he will try to find out where she is and go harass her. We don't know whether he is going to try to get the embassy to do that."

Lawmakers and activists in Australia and Britain have urged their governments to grant asylum to Ms Qunun, who was finally allowed by Thailand to enter the country on Monday, after being stranded for nearly 48 hours at Bangkok airport under threat of being expelled.

She is staying in a Bangkok hotel while the UNHCR processes her application for refugee status before she can seek asylum in a third country. UNHCR staff interviewed her yesterday.

"It could take several days to process the case and determine the next steps," said the UNHCR's Thailand representative Giuseppe de Vincentiis in a statement.

"We are very grateful that the Thai authorities did not send Rahaf

back against her will and are extending protection to her," he said.

The teen claimed she was abducted after arriving in Bangkok and had her passport confiscated by Saudi Arabian diplomatic staff.

Ms Qunun's plight unfolded on social media, drawing support from around the world. It convinced the Thai authorities to back down from sending her back to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia's embassy in Thailand denied reports that Riyadh had requested her extradition.

The Thai immigration chief on Monday said the embassy had alerted the authorities to the case, and said the woman had run away from her parents and they feared for her safety.

In Australia, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young made a call on social media for her government to issue the teenager with an emergency travel document so she could fly to the country to seek asylum.

The Australian government said it was monitoring the case.

A spokesman for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade said it was deeply concerned about "the claims made by Rahaf, that she may be harmed if returned to Saudi Arabia".

Meanwhile, a woman in Britain has launched an online petition calling on Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt to grant the teen asylum and issue her an emergency travel document. Within hours, the petition had secured thousands of signatures. REUTERS



Police and parents outside the school in Beijing yesterday where a man had earlier attacked pupils with a hammer. The attacker has been detained by police. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

20 kids injured in hammer attack at Beijing school

BEIJING • A Chinese man attacked at least 20 young children at a Beijing primary school with a hammer yesterday, state television reported, in a rare act of violence in the capital.

A 49-year-old man, a former maintenance worker at the school, was detained after venting his anger on the children after his work contract was not renewed, state television cited the police as saying.

Twenty people were taken to hospital, the government in the Xicheng district of the capital said in a post on its social media account.

Three suffered heavy injuries, but their condition was stable, it said.

Police cars lined the main road close to the school when Reuters arrived at the scene.

Several police officers were seen coming from the school carrying items including sealed paper bags marked "physical evidence" and silver cases before driving off.

Parents waited outside for their children as the school day ended.

Almost all of the parents Reuters approached declined to comment.

"I heard that children were at-

tacked (by someone) with a knife, so I'm very anxious," said a woman surnamed Zhou, as she waited for her child to finish school.

Another parent, surnamed Jia, said she was concerned about her child's psychological well-being.

"Even though they were on the same floor as the one where this took place, they didn't know anything about this. So I really don't want this information to be spread widely so that he starts to feel scared," she said.

The attacker, originally from Heilongjiang province, has been detained by the police and an investigation has begun, state television said.

Violent crime is rare in China, but there has been a series of knife and axe attacks in recent years, many targeting children.

In January 2017, a man in southern China stabbed and wounded 12 children with a vegetable knife. He was executed this month.

"People who hurt children do not deserve to be forgiven," a social media user wrote in a post on microblogging site Weibo. REUTERS

India's trade unions strike against labour policies



Members of trade unions in India rallying during a nationwide general strike called by leaders in Bangalore yesterday. The central trade unions of India called for a 48-hour nationwide general strike as a protest against labour policies enacted by the central government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

WorldBriefs

Jakarta budgets \$1.4b for disaster response

JAKARTA • Indonesia will more than double its disaster response budget to 15 trillion rupiah (\$1.4 billion) this year, officials said yesterday, after a series of major natural disasters devastated three regions of the vast archipelago last year.

The country suffered its deadliest year in over a decade last year, when more than 3,000 people died in tsunamis and earthquakes in Sulawesi, Lombok, West Java and Sumatra.

Five trillion rupiah will be allocated to rehabilitation and reconstruction, while 10 trillion rupiah will be reserved for disaster response, said Finance Ministry spokesman Nufransa Wira Sakti. REUTERS

3 killed in two-train crash in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG • At least three people were killed and around 300 injured yesterday after two trains collided in South Africa's capital Pretoria, said an emergency services official.

The crash left 82 passengers with serious injuries after a packed train careered into a stationary train at Mountain View station. "We do not rule out the possibility of additional fatalities as we search under the wreckage," said emergency official Charles Mabaso. REUTERS

Danish govt planning 9-island business area

COPENHAGEN • The Danish government plans to build nine small islands around Copenhagen, creating as many as 12,000 jobs and space for 380 businesses.

The project, which according to the government will create one of northern Europe's "largest, greenest and most innovative business areas", is expected to be completed in 2040, with the first islands due to be ready in 2028. BLOOMBERG

Britain to extend drone no-fly zone around airports

LONDON • Britain will extend a drone exclusion zone and give police new powers against lawbreaking operators, the government has said, after sightings last month paralysed the nation's second-busiest airport in the run-up to Christmas.

The government said the drone exclusion zone around airports would be extended to about 5km,

with additional extensions at runway ends, from the current 1km.

Police will also be allowed to fine drone operators up to £100 (\$173) for failing to comply when instructed to land a device or not showing registration to fly a drone.

The Home Office will also begin to test and evaluate the use of counter-drone technology at airports and prisons after Gatwick

and Heathrow, Britain's busiest airport, announced they were investing millions of pounds in such equipment.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling told Parliament on Monday that disruption to flights at Gatwick between Dec 19 and 21 was "deliberate, irresponsible and calculated, as well as illegal".

The pre-Christmas disruption at

the airport led to 1,000 flight cancellations affecting 140,000 passengers.

The Ministry of Defence remained on standby to deal with any further problems at Gatwick or any other airport, said Mr Grayling.

Tens of thousands of passengers were affected and those responsible for the disruption have not been identified.

The exclusion zone around British airports is currently 1km and will be extended to 5km under the plan announced late on Monday.

From Nov 30 this year, operators of drones weighing between 250g and 20kg will have to register and take an online pilot competency test.

REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

News analysis

Pompeo seeks to allay concerns over pullout

US Secretary of State in Middle East to assure allies of American commitment to region



Nirmal Ghosh

US Bureau Chief
In Washington

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has tweeted that he is in the Middle East to “send a clear message to our friends and partners that the US is committed to the region, committed to #defeatISIS, and committed to counter Iran’s destabilising activities”.

On Monday, while en route to the region, he told journalists his message would be that “the United States is still committed to all the missions that we signed up for with them over the past two years”.

Mr Pompeo is visiting Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait.

“The counter-ISIS campaign continues... the counter-Iran campaign absolutely continues, and our commitment to support Middle East stability is still full throttle,” he said.

The eight-day trip, during which he will give a significant speech in Cairo, comes shortly after national security adviser John Bolton, while visiting Israel, also appeared to temper President Donald Trump’s abrupt Dec 19 announcement that he was withdrawing the 2,000-odd US troops deployed in Syria, saying the ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and Syria) had been defeated.

“There are objectives that we want to accomplish that condition the withdrawal,” Mr Bolton told reporters in Jerusalem. “The timetable flows from the policy decisions that we need to implement.”

Those conditions included the defeat of remnants of ISIS and protection for the Kurdish militias who fought alongside US troops in Syria. Administration officials say the withdrawal will take place but will be strategised and coordinated in order to not leave space for the resurgence of ISIS.

Amid the backlash over the decision to withdraw from Syria, including the resignation of Mr James Mattis as defence secretary, Mr Trump has received support from unexpected quarters.

“His decision is in compliance

with US and international law,” Democratic congressman Ro Khanna of California wrote in the Washington Post on Dec 22.

“The presence of US troops in the Syrian civil war was never authorised by Congress,” he wrote. Neither had it been approved by the United Nations.

“Trump also deserves credit for standing up to the war hawks within his own administration who started inventing rationales for remaining in the country: countering Iran and seeing an end to the Assad regime,” Mr Khanna said in his article. “That is the definition of mission creep.”

But the apparently precipitous nature of Mr Trump’s decision-making – while making sense to his core domestic base and to many who believe, as America’s political left has done for decades, that the US should not get involved in wars abroad – has undermined trust and will leave a sense of strategic uncertainty in the region.

“A lot of damage has already been done,” Georgetown University Middle East expert Paul Sullivan told The Straits Times. “With the lack of trust that was always there between the Kurds and the US, it would be logical for them to not trust us fully.”

The first message from the President – about an immediate withdrawal – was probably closer to what Mr Trump wants to see happen, he said. But the reaction must have prompted those to whom the President listens to urge him to reconsider.

“He was not thinking through the complexities of Syria, and there are few places as complex as Syria,” Dr Sullivan said. “Syria is a zone which includes the Russians, the Turks, the Saudis, the Qataris, the Israelis, ISIS and Al-Qaeda. It is a strategic zone.”

Dr Amanda Sloat, a former State Department official who is now with the Brookings Institution, told the website Al-Monitor: “If nothing else, it makes it hard for local actors to trust what Trump’s envoys are telling them when they know it could be undermined by the President.”

Meanwhile, Mr Trump, Mr Bolton and Mr Pompeo are trying to close the gap between their positions.

Mr Pompeo told journalists the coalition against ISIS and Iran was unequalled in the Middle East. “This is a coalition that understands that the largest threats – terrorism and the Islamic Republic of Iran – are

things that we ought to work on jointly, and we’ll be marshalling all of the resources – theirs and ours – to achieve them,” he said.

Mr Trump denied there were any contradictions in policy, tweeting: “We will be leaving at a proper pace while at the same time continuing to fight ISIS and doing all else that is prudent and necessary!”

“My point exactly,” Mr Bolton responded in a tweet.

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Mr Mike Pompeo talking to journalists during the flight to the Middle East on Monday. He said that “the counter-ISIS campaign continues... the counter-Iran campaign absolutely continues”. PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump to make case for southern border wall in TV address

WASHINGTON • President Donald Trump was set yesterday to make his case to Americans that a “crisis” at the US border with Mexico requires a wall.

Mr Trump’s remarks, scheduled for a prime-time address at 9pm, would aim at building support for a campaign promise that has sparked an 18-day government shutdown. It would be his latest attempt to convince Democrats, not to mention furloughed government workers, to support his push for a steel barrier on the US southern border that he says is needed to curb the flow of drugs and illegal immigration.

All major US television networks agreed to air Mr Trump’s speech, prompting Democrats, who say a wall would be expensive, inefficient and immoral, to seek equal time.

“Now that the television networks have decided to air the President’s address, which, if his past statements are any indication, will be full of malice and misinformation, Democrats must immediately be given equal airtime,” said a joint statement issued by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer.

Vice-President Mike Pence said on Monday that administration officials and congressional staff dis-

cussed the border “crisis” in meetings, over the weekend, about how to break an impasse over funding and reopen the government.

“We made progress in establishing the fact that we do have a humanitarian and security crisis at our southern border. The President will address that as he speaks to the nation,” Mr Pence told reporters.

The emphasis on a crisis comes as Mr Trump is considering declaring a national emergency in an effort to bypass Congress and build the wall without its approval.

Democrats, who control the US House of Representatives, have rejected Mr Trump’s demand for US\$5.7 billion (S\$7.8 billion) to help build such a wall.

Talks to fund the government have broken down over that point, leaving several government agencies shuttered and some 800,000 government workers furloughed or working without pay.

Mr Trump had promised a wall when he was running for the White House in 2016, making it one of his signature campaign issues, and saying Mexico would pay for it.

The President will continue pressing his case with a trip to the US southern border tomorrow.

REUTERS

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Mr Dave Das, senior vice-president of consumer electronics at Samsung Electronics America, giving a presentation of his company's new range of TV units, which will have a dedicated iTunes app. With the trend towards bigger TVs, Samsung and LG have unveiled 8K TVs with sizes up to 88 inches and 98 inches, respectively. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

TV wars at world's biggest consumer electronics show

Apple allows users to play videos on Samsung, LG TVs, without its TV-streaming console

Trevor Tan
In Las Vegas

CES, the world's largest consumer electronics trade show, has always been a battleground for TV makers ready to dazzle with their latest wizardry. This year is no exception.

Even before CES 2019 opens on Tuesday US time, Korean big brands Samsung and LG have already shown off their magic – Samsung with a “modular” 75-inch TV that can be taken apart or put together to form different sizes, and LG with a TV that can roll up or down.

But the most interesting develop-

ment is Apple allowing Samsung and LG TVs to “natively support” its AirPlay 2, which means iPhone or iPad users can easily play videos from iTunes or other video apps on these TVs without an Apple TV-streaming console.

Furthermore, Samsung's 2018 and 2019 range of TVs will have a dedicated iTunes app that allows access to one's iTunes movie and TV show library. This is the first time Apple has allowed the iTunes app to be on third-party devices, apart

from Windows machines.

“The inclusion of a native iTunes app on Samsung Smart TVs is a huge deal, unlocking access to iTunes content on millions of devices,” said Mr Paul Gagnon, research firm IHS Markit's director of technology analysis and research.

It represents a massive shift in Apple's “walled garden” approach to content and ecosystems, he added.

On Sunday, the organiser of CES 2019, which runs till Jan 11, predicted that there would be fewer

TV units sold in the United States this year.

CES organiser Consumer Technology Association (CTA) said there would be 42 million TV units sold in the US this year, a 1 per cent decline from last year.

But future upgrades will be driven by 4K TVs, with a 14 per cent increase in US sales this year, compared to 2018, as well as the latest 8K TVs, said the association.

“Consumers are moving upwards in terms of TV screen size,” said Mr

The most interesting development is Apple allowing Samsung and LG TVs to “natively support” its AirPlay 2, which means iPhone or iPad users can easily play videos from iTunes or other video apps to these TVs without an Apple TV-streaming console.

Ben Arnold, CTA's senior director of innovation and trends, during a presentation on Sunday.

But with 8K TVs having sizes of 65 inches and larger, Mr Arnold predicted that 8K TVs will make up the majority of large-screen TVs sold.

This is because of the “nature of premium customers buying it at the higher price point and the appeal of the visual experience”, he added.

Both Samsung and LG have unveiled 8K TVs with sizes up to 88 inches and 98 inches respectively.

Meanwhile, Japan's Sony also launched its first 8K LCD TVs with the Bravia Master Series Z9G, which will be available in 85 inches and 95 inches.

This series is one of the newly launched Sony Android TV models which are also compatible with Apple AirPlay 2.

Samsung's new modular product, the 75-inch 4K microLED TV, is still in the prototype stage, while LG's Signature Oled TV R, its rollable TV, will go on sale sometime this year, though its pricing is not confirmed.

The LG Signature Oled TV R has a big sound bar that doubles as a stand for the rolling TV to appear and disappear. When in Full View mode, it becomes a 65-inch 4K Oled TV.

It also has a Line View mode that displays modes like clock or music, while a Zero view mode has the entire TV retracted and becomes a full-blown 100W front-firing Dolby Atmos audio system.

“The rollable Oled TV is certainly a very fascinating product in the ultra-Premium space, like the wallpaper Oled that LG launched a few CES ago. But at the upper end of available price points, it will sell relatively few sets,” said Mr Gagnon.

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Sorry mugger who punched above his weight

RIO DE JANEIRO • A robber who tried to steal a cell-phone from a young woman in Rio de Janeiro found out the hard way that mugging a mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter who goes by the nickname “the Iron Lady” is not a good idea.

Ms Polyana Viana, an Ultimate Fighting Championship strawweight, brought the hapless mugger down with two punches and a kick and held him in a “rear-naked choke” before making him sit and wait for the police, she told the sports website MMA Junkie.

The attempted crime happened late Saturday as Ms Viana, 27, was waiting for her Uber ride outside her apartment block. She said the man told her he had a gun but she surmised it probably was not real and, in any case, “he won't have time to draw it” before she went into action.

After subduing the assailant she discovered the weapon was in fact a cardboard replica of a pistol.

Ms Viana posted images of the would-be robber, looking dejected and bruised, with blood on his sleeveless shirt and on a hand, as she kept his arm in a “kimura-like position” until the police arrived.

“Since he took the punches very quickly, I think he was scared,” she told the site.

She said that after the suspect's processing by police and treatment for his injuries, she went home and made dinner. Her hands hurt a bit the next day, but it was nothing serious and she was otherwise unharmed.

Muggings are a constant risk in Rio and other cities in Brazil. The country's new President, Mr Jair Bolsonaro, was elected on promises to crack down on crime.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Ms Polyana Viana, a mixed martial arts fighter in Brazil, easily subdued her would-be assailant. PHOTOS: POLYANA VIANA/FACEBOOK, DANAWHITE/INSTAGRAM



FRIGHT NIGHT

Since he took the punches very quickly, I think he was scared.



MS POLYANA VIANA, an Ultimate Fighting Championship strawweight, on bringing the hapless mugger down with two punches and a kick, and holding him in a “rear-naked choke” before making him sit and wait for the police.



According to AfD, three masked men hit Mr Frank Magnitz with a piece of wood and kicked him on the ground.

German far-right MP injured in targeted attack

BERLIN • A far-right German MP was seriously injured in a “politically motivated” gang attack in the north of the country, police said yesterday.

Mr Frank Magnitz, leader in Bremen of the anti-immigration populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD), was assaulted in the city centre on Monday afternoon.

“Given the victim's work, we believe that this is a politically motivated act,” the police said.

The AfD party published a photograph of Mr Magnitz unconscious on a hospital bed, his face bleeding and swollen with a gash on his forehead.

It said three masked men had carried out the attack.

“They hit him with a piece of wood until he was unconscious and then kicked him on the ground,” a statement from the party said, adding that a construction worker had intervened to stop the assault. “Today is a dark day for democracy in Germany.”

AfD leader Joerg Meuthen tweeted that Mr Magnitz was “beaten almost to death” in a “cowardly and sickening” attack.

Mr Johannes Kahrs, an MP from the Social Democrats, junior partners in the ruling coalition, said that “violence is never acceptable” and that “extremism in any form is rubbish”.

He wished Mr Magnitz a quick recovery.

Mr Cem Ozdemir of the opposition Greens party said he hoped those responsible could be “found and convicted soon” and that “nothing justifies violence”.

“Those who fight hate with hate only allow hate to win in the end,” added the politician, who is of Turkish origin.

Last week, an explosive device detonated in a rubbish bin damaged an AfD office in Saxony. Three suspects were detained.

And last weekend in Lower Saxony, the home of a local AfD politician was targeted with graffiti while a party office was attacked with a paint bomb.

The AfD entered Germany's Parliament with almost 13 per cent of the vote in September 2017, making it the strongest opposition party in the Bundestag Lower House.

The party is expected to make gains in European elections in May and three regional polls in the former communist east later this year. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Suspect in German politicians' data hack arrested

BERLIN • Police in Germany said yesterday that they have arrested a 20-year-old suspect in the case of private data stolen from hundreds of politicians – including Chancellor Angela Merkel – and published online.

“The prosecutor's office in Frankfurt, the Central Office for Fighting Internet and Computer Crime and the Federal Police Office (BKA) searched the apartment of a 20-year-old suspect on (Sunday) and took him into custody,” the BKA said in a statement.

Media reports said the suspect, who was detained in the western

state of Hesse, had confessed to the authorities and was believed to have acted alone. The BKA declined to comment.

The stolen information, which comprised home addresses, mobile phone numbers, letters, invoices and copies of identity documents, was first released via Twitter last month, but its spread gathered pace last week.

Among the estimated 1,000 people affected were members of the Bundestag (Germany's Lower House of Parliament), the European Parliament, as well as regional and local assemblies.

Deputies from all parties represented in the Bundestag were targeted, with the exception of the far-right Alternative for Germany, the largest opposition group in Parliament.

News weekly Der Spiegel reported that police had tracked down the suspect based on witness accounts and “digital evidence” left online. He had destroyed his computer by the time they raided his home.

Although the leak was sweeping, there is no evidence that sensitive information had reached the public, investigators and the

Interior Ministry have said. In the vast majority of cases, only basic contact information was made available.

The leak has nevertheless been deeply embarrassing for the political class and turned up the heat on the unpopular Interior Minister Horst Seehofer.

Critics said the ministry and the authorities were slow in informing affected politicians of the leak and in moving to stop it.

Information technology experts said it was only by luck that the data theft had not been far more damaging. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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Challenges for Earth? Watch this space

The successful landing of China's lunar probe on the far side of the Moon is the latest human achievement in space exploration. The erstwhile Soviet Union inaugurated the Space Age in 1957 with the successful launch of Sputnik I, the world's first artificial satellite. The event spurred on the United States to stay in the space race, a momentum that led ultimately to the Apollo 11 mission which landed the first men on the Moon in 1969. Now, China has surpassed the remit of lunar investigations by landing the Chang'e-4 to discover what lies on the mysterious "dark side" of the Moon. While the US and Russia can launch similar landings on the far side, China got there first and, not unexpectedly, celebrated its latest significant technological accomplishment.

China has demonstrated that lunar exploration is not the preserve of any one nation, cultural system or ideology. Much as Sputnik put the world on notice about the technological abilities of the then Soviet Union, which in turn enhanced its economic and strategic capabilities, the Chang'e-4 landing showed that China's path to modernisation is well on its way. Even countries that do not share China's political model and strategic goals are heartened by its scientific achievements. The Moon is neutral to the terrestrial ideologies that make humans strive to reach it.

In that spirit of a truly global approach to space research, the hope is that China's successes will add to the store of human benefits created by forays into the universe. According to the International Space Exploration Coordination Group, human activity in space has improved the quality of life on Earth. Exploration contributed to the development of solar panels, implantable heart monitors, cancer therapy, lightweight materials, water purification systems, improved computing systems, and a global search and rescue system. The group notes that innovations required for space exploration, such as those related to miniaturisation, will propel improvements in services on Earth and produce better return on investment in institutional and commercial space activities.

It is good that the competitive nature of space exploration results in collaborative enterprises that improve the human condition. The long-held goal of setting up human colonies in space might also be arrived at one day. But even as nations reach into space and aim for the stars, the reality is that the most difficult quests remain on Earth. The willingness of space-exploring nations to collaborate and share findings of their research and explorations with others will be critical to helping the world address and come closer to resolving many of the challenging problems of a planet and its inhabitants who are afflicted, among other things, by catastrophic climate change, conflict over water and natural resources, and the alarming degradation of the physical environment.

EconomicAffairs

China's debt bomb is ticking faster

Rising debt and slowing growth can be a deadly combination



Vikram Khanna

Associate Editor

"Over 100 per cent of our year-over-year worldwide revenue decline occurred in Greater China," said Apple's chief executive officer Tim Cook last week, explaining why Apple was forced to cut its guidance on fourth-quarter sales by US\$5 billion (S\$6.8 billion), which sent the company's stock tumbling 7 per cent and the US stock market into a swoon. "We did not foresee the magnitude of the economic deterioration."

Apple's shock announcement has refocused attention on China's economic slowdown. How it plays out could be one of the big economic stories to watch in 2019.

The data suggests the slowdown is serious and broad-based.

Most economists and investors in China do not take official Chinese gross domestic product (GDP) numbers seriously (and by some accounts, nor do Chinese officials). They look for proxy numbers, such as car sales (down 13.9 per cent in November year on year, after smaller declines in the two previous months); consumption tax revenue (down 61.6 per cent in October and 71.2 per cent in November); retail sales growth (the lowest in more than a decade) and the purchasing managers' index – a gauge of future economic activity as well as export orders – all of which point to contraction.

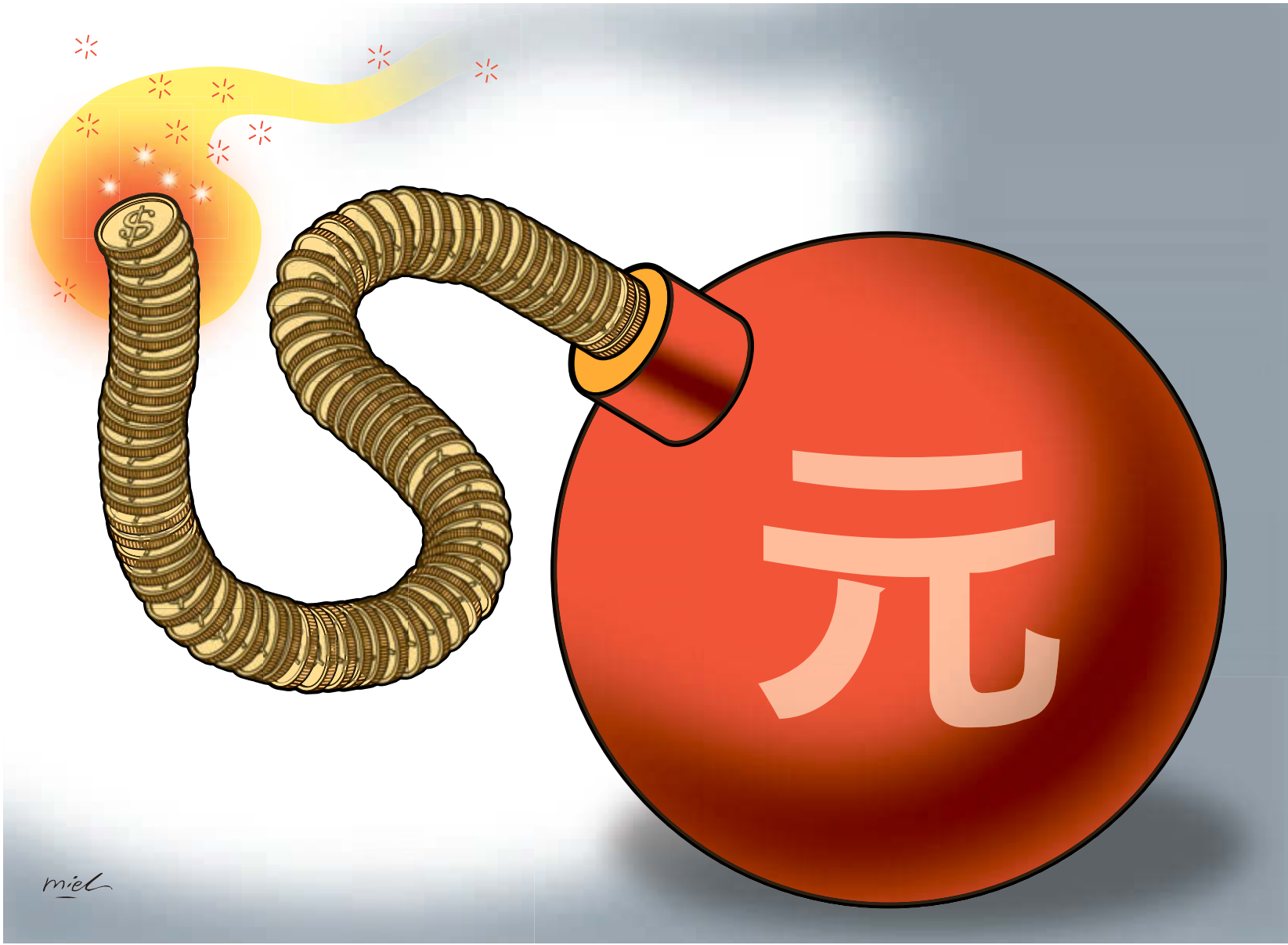
China's property markets are heading down and there are reports that high-end restaurants, five-star hotels and even ordinary wage earners are suffering.

In October, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) cut its GDP growth forecast for China to 6.2 per cent in 2019, from an earlier forecast of 6.4 per cent, cautioning that this assumes that additional tariffs on China by the US will not go into effect.

The IMF predicts growth slowing every year for the next five years, to 5.5 per cent in 2023. Private economists are more gloomy. The Conference Board, a US economic consulting firm, estimates China's growth at just below 5 per cent. Peking University's professor of finance Michael Pettis thinks it's closer to 3 per cent.

DEBT-DRIVEN GROWTH

But whatever China's actual growth



may be, the big story around it is not the trade war, which only aggravates the problem; exports account for less than 20 per cent of its GDP. China's growth is largely domestically driven. The biggest story behind it is debt.

China's debt problem has its origins in its 4 trillion yuan (about S\$792 billion) economic stimulus package launched during the global financial crisis in 2008.

Over the next decade, China's banks lent with wild abandon. An IMF study last year pointed out that Chinese banks' balance sheets expanded by more than 50 percentage points of GDP over the previous three years, and stood at more than three times the average for emerging markets.

China's credit boom has been the longest in history. Alongside, China's debt has exploded.

At the end of 2008, it was 170 per cent of GDP. But by the first quarter of 2018, debt had ballooned to close to 300 per cent of GDP according to the Institute for International Finance.

Economists are mostly agreed that long credit booms and fast debt build-ups almost always end badly. Examples include the United States, which binged on sub-prime mortgage debt from 2002 to 2007, leading to the global financial crisis; Thailand, where a multi-year property bubble triggered the 1997 Asian financial crisis; and Japan,

where massive credit growth in the late 1980s led to a stock market and economic crash, followed by a quarter century of deflation.

Morgan Stanley Investment Management's head of emerging markets and chief global strategist Ruchir Sharma has pointed out that the single most important

300%

China's debt by the first quarter of 2018, as a percentage of its GDP, according to the Institute for International Finance. China's credit boom has been the longest in history. Alongside, China's debt has exploded. Economists are mostly agreed that long credit booms and fast debt build-ups almost always end badly.

predictor of economic and financial trouble is when a country takes on too much debt over a short span of time, as China has done.

UNPRODUCTIVE LENDING

More than half of China's debt is corporate debt, most of it incurred by state-owned enterprises (SOEs), of which there are around 150,000. A few thousand of these are corporate zombies – loss-making behemoths that survive mainly at the mercy of state-owned banks which keep rolling over their loans.

Local governments have also been huge borrowers, buying up land and building infrastructure as well as townships, office skyscrapers and amusement parks, regardless of demand. This binge borrowing has led to the rise of China's so-called "ghost cities", with hundreds of blocs of vacant apartments and industrial parks, the handiwork of zealous local officials hoping to replicate the success of Shenzhen and Pudong.

The overbuilding and industrial overcapacity has been fuelled mainly by debt, and the more debt has grown, the less productive it has become, as the profitable opportunities get progressively exhausted. Thus, ever increasing sums of debt are needed to produce the same amount of GDP growth.

Morgan Stanley's Mr Sharma estimated that in China, by 2016, it took US\$6 of debt to create US\$1

worth of GDP growth. At the peak of the US housing bubble in 2008, the comparable figure was US\$3 in debt for every US\$1 in growth.

Noting that "risks are tilted to the downside", the IMF, in its review of China's economy last year, proposed that the government needed to rein in credit growth as well as off-budget spending by the local authorities.

But it does not look like it's going to happen. The IMF report states that the Chinese authorities disagreed with the fund's view that its monetary policy was accommodative.

In the face of slowing growth, China slashed banks' reserve requirements four times last year, enabling them to lend even more freely. Premier Li Keqiang indicated recently that this policy will continue in 2019, together with more spending on infrastructure.

Instead of cutting back, China seems to be doubling down on its credit and debt binge.

EXCEPTIONAL FEATURES

Some analysts believe that while high debt is indeed a problem, China has certain exceptional features that would shield it from a crisis: It has a high level of savings, most of its debt is domestic rather than external, and most importantly, it is backstopped by the government, which owns the country's biggest banks. Rather

than allow troubled SOEs to collapse, they are bailed out for as long as necessary.

Unlike the US, China's government also has the freedom to manipulate its exchange rate.

But the fact remains that the greater the debt build-up, the more China's savings will be at risk. While the government may indeed be able to provide a backstop which enables banks to "extend and pretend" – that is, keep extending loans to zombie companies as well as local government projects and pretending that they are viable – the key point is that the money that is lent does not belong to the government, but to China's savers.

So while such a charade can be carried on for longer than usual in a state-controlled system, it cannot go on indefinitely. At some point, either the zombies must be allowed to die because they become too expensive to sustain, or taxes must be raised to bail out the banks – both of which would impact ordinary people.

The fact that debt is internal rather than external is also little consolation: US debt during the sub-prime mortgage boom as well as Japan's debt in the late 1980s were also internal – yet they led to serious crises. As in the US and Japan, China's property market could also be a vulnerability.

And while China does indeed have the luxury of being able to manipulate its exchange rate, the choices it faces are difficult when its economy is slowing. If it tries to guide the yuan lower to make its exports cheaper, it runs the risk of higher capital outflows – a risk flagged by the IMF. But if it tries to strengthen its currency through higher interest rates to prevent capital outflows, that would aggravate the debt problem and threaten growth, as well as penalise exporters.

DANGER AHEAD

China has competent economic officials who have recognised and acknowledged many of the problems cited in this article. China has also, for many years, defied its doomayers and navigated through many economic hazards, ranging from periodic overheating and market turbulence to the global financial crisis.

But it is now entering a particularly dangerous period. Rising debt amid slowing growth tends to expose problems that have been hidden before, including over-leveraged companies that can no longer survive, property owners whose collateral values fall far below the mortgages that they owe, and financial fraudsters whose Ponzi schemes start to unravel.

China's debt bomb has been ticking away for longer than any other country has been able to endure. In this year of economic slowdown amid a trade conflict, it will be ticking faster.

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Meritocracy and its toll on our students

Two volumes of writings by undergraduates highlight young people's anxieties over success and failure.

Pang Eng Fong and Linda Lim

Poverty, inequality, social mobility, meritocracy and the role of Singapore's education system have been the subject of many commentaries in the past year. Most focused on low-income workers and families. Young university students and the challenges they face have attracted less attention, perhaps because they are the assumed "winners" of a meritocratic paper chase. Our discussion here draws on more than 300 submissions that business undergraduates at Singapore Management University (SMU) wrote for a capstone class in their final year. They could choose any topic, including introspecting about their life in and beyond SMU. More than a third of these

submissions were published in two volumes – Making Sense Of Life (2017) and Still Making Sense Of Life (2018) – selected to reflect the wide range of voices and topics. Many are auto-ethnographies, personal stories, which may not be representative or generalisable but will resonate with others who share similar experiences. They confirm the positive role that SMU (and other universities) plays in social mobility in Singapore. Most of the student writers come from middle-income families with non-graduate parents. Many say their families are "not well-off" and some, that family finances are "tight". But none suffered from a lack of basic needs, such as food and housing, or had to rely on state welfare support for daily needs. Nearly all acknowledge they were materially well cared for and provided with private tuition and, for some, various "luxuries" such as gaming equipment, extra-curricular

classes and branded consumer goods. Direct experience of absolute or relative poverty is lacking and many say they are in a more fortunate economic position than their parents were when young. Many entered SMU through the polytechnic route, not junior colleges. They had attended neighbourhood, not elite, primary or secondary schools, including several from the Normal stream. Their families obviously did not need them to forgo or drop out of four years of further education to support them, but a few mention they are eager to start working so they can contribute to family finances. Students highlight distinctive aspects of their SMU education as contributing to their personal and professional development and career goals – most notably, interactive classroom pedagogy, internships, the community service requirement and especially international exchange experiences. These opportunities, they say, enhanced their preparation for work, attractiveness to employers and eventual climb up the income ladder. There were intangible benefits too. One student from the Normal stream, after volunteering for a community project in Cambodia, asks: "How is it possible for the villagers to have so little and yet have so much? I have everything that they do not have, yet I feel that my life is lacking in one way or another. The experience taught me to look at life from a different perspective instead of only my own." Few contributors express, in class or in their essays, reservations about meritocracy. Most accept the national and dominant family narrative – that success comes from doing well academically and working hard. A few question the societal and familial definition of success in purely material terms. Some note that SMU business students are more materially self-centred than those in other schools, with less interest in public service or non-profit work. A few took the path less travelled. One decided to be a teacher after hearing "everyone's

take on life and their values". Another chose to work for a refugee agency, writing: "I neglect my mother and family for the greater good by working in a sector that strives to feed the hungry, shelter the displaced and empower the poor". Some recognise that luck played a major role in their landing a plum job. Absent was a sense of entitlement; instead, humility and modesty were evident. Students did not credit their success to superior personal qualities such as intelligence, talent or eloquence. **OPPORTUNITY COST OF SUCCESS** There is, however, a keen sense of the opportunity cost of this success. Meritocracy does take a toll on family relationships. As some students see it, their parents work extremely hard and long hours, demanding and expecting in return only outstanding academic performance. To them, it seems that every resource, nearly every interpersonal interaction, is to ensure the material success of the

Meritocracy does take a toll on family relationships. As some students see it, their parents work extremely hard and long hours, demanding and expecting in return only outstanding academic performance. To them, it seems that every resource, nearly every interpersonal interaction, is to ensure the material success of the next generation. A good number of student contributors feel emotionally neglected, with an unmet yearning for unconditional love and acceptance by parents for who they are.

next generation. A good number of student contributors feel emotionally neglected, with an unmet yearning for unconditional love and acceptance by parents for who they are. They regret lost time not spent together unrelated to the collective goal, and feel that their parents do not understand, appreciate or even love them, since their worth as children is defined largely in terms of academic results. It may not be coincidental that many find in organised religion a source of comfort and place for fellowship with others. Some students also see how the struggle for financial goals beyond mere survival causes tension within and between parents, resulting in marital discord and even break-up. They are acutely aware of the pain in a less-successful parent's poignant exhortation of "don't be like me". Parents are responding to external incentives in the wider economy and society, and children, to the school system that sorts them for future roles in it. A close second to family pressures in student ruminations is exam performance, starting from the PSLE, and going through the O levels, A levels and the last semester at SMU. A remarkable number remember their exact grade for every subject at every examination, and associated GPAs (grade point averages). They vividly recall their own and their parents' reactions to the grades, and related dreams and nightmares. Many express their surprise and gratitude over being accepted into SMU's business school, despite mediocre grades, or because SMU assesses applicants on their whole portfolio of skills, interests and experiences. It is a rare student who mentions anything akin to a "love of learning", or something learnt in school or university which excited and inspired the next stage of his or her education or professional choice. Even co-curricular activities are mentioned less with enthusiasm or genuine interest than as another "resume requirement" to make it to the next gate. For one overachieving student,

her college years became "a tick-box exercise". She held leadership roles and excelled in academic and non-academic areas, driven by "a perpetual desire to be respected and admired". But her achievements isolated her from others, leading her to remark: "What a way to end my 16 years of formal education." How students dealt with these dual family and school pressures as vulnerable teenagers and young adults is revealing. Many mention periods when they felt life was "meaningless" and exhibited symptoms of depression; several had suicidal thoughts and a couple of them or their siblings even attempted suicide. A few "escaped" by turning to and becoming addicted to gambling, alcohol, smoking or sex. On the positive side, some channelled their energies into competitive sports, kickboxing, biking and dancing. In their final semester, the majority share a sense of accomplishment at having overcome many struggles, and an affecting sense of gratitude to their parents, friends and SMU. One notes that she looks to her future life with a "bittersweet mix of relief, anticipation and apprehension". What should one make of such views from students? It is true SMU business students may be "self-selected" to be more driven towards material success, their "dream jobs" narrowly limited to financial service, marketing and other corporate executive positions. But they often feel like they had "no choice" in this selection process – some explicitly so, following family dictates or because they failed to get admitted into another preferred field. Those who choose the programme seemed to do so for practical reasons ("to get a good, high-paying job"), rather than for any intrinsic motivation. They are simply following the path of meritocracy, Singapore style, to which they have been inured since childhood. But if these essays are reflective of how other students feel, we wonder if there is another way of raising and educating our young that might exact less opportunity cost, and allow young Singaporeans to earlier and more fully discover their true selves, exploring and accessing different pathways rather than being propelled on an escalator whose speed is set by others? From these essays, it appears that students pondering alternatives did so after encountering different ways of being, living and working in other countries, through SMU's international exchange programmes. One such student, after meeting people from different backgrounds, realises "we were all unique in our own special ways and society's perception of what is good or better is just an opinion". In many ways, undergraduates in Singapore exemplify the pragmatic bent of our society. In class, existential puzzles did not engross them any more than they did undergraduates during our time, half a century ago. Yet many in the older generation may not appreciate the hard choices the young today, and their families, must contend with in a society dedicated to promoting material prosperity. On their part, young graduates – even as they struggle with achievement, success and stress in our hyper-competitive society – will find their own ways of behaving, believing, becoming and being themselves, making their own good sense of life as it unfolds for them.

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Among the Singapore Management University undergraduates who wrote essays for a capstone class in their final year, a good number of these student contributors feel that their parents do not understand, appreciate or even love them, since their worth as children is defined largely in terms of academic results. ST FILE PHOTO

Here's how to avert a looming recession

Lawrence H. Summers

You might say a person is fundamentally healthy so long as you cannot yet say what will cause his death. Likewise, an economic recovery is healthy if it is not clear what will cause the next recession. By this standard, the recovery from the 2008 financial crisis, though disappointingly slow, has been healthy for most of the past decade. This is now in serious doubt. Dr Paul Samuelson's famous quip that the stock market has predicted nine of the past five recessions cautions against overreacting to

recent market moves. But credit spreads have widened considerably, commodity prices have softened, and investors have started demanding higher yields for short-term US bonds than for those with longer terms. Unlike equity markets, such "yield curve inversions" have not historically tended to produce false recession predictions. The overall judgment of financial markets is that a recession is significantly more likely than not in the next two years. Real economic indicators for the world's largest economies – China and the United States – also suggest cause for concern. Almost every Chinese indicator

in the past few months has come in below expectations. Beijing now sees the need for stimulus measures if it is to credibly report the attainment of growth targets. Revisions of economic forecasts tend to run in the same direction for protracted periods as forecasters adjust to emerging realities. This tendency is especially pronounced in China, given the extreme political sensitivity of economic statistics. In the US, inflation is again running below the Federal Reserve's 2 per cent target, and comparisons of the yields on ordinary and inflation-adjusted bonds suggest investors expect this to continue for the next decade. While jobs growth remains strong, employment is usually a lagging statistic. Forward-looking indicators of business and consumer sentiment suggest that growth is likely to slow. Perhaps the US economy will enjoy a soft landing; Jobs growth would slow towards long-run sustainable levels, and productivity

growth would accelerate enough to allow continued gross domestic product growth of 2 per cent and increased wage growth without accelerating inflation. But this would require both policy skill and good luck. Given that we are starting from very high debt levels and low unemployment, a recession is the more likely outcome. It is almost inconceivable that the global economy will remain healthy in the face of serious economic problems in both China and the US, even leaving aside their conflicts over trade and technology. Europe lacks economic energy, and the uncertainties associated with Brexit, French protests, the German political transition and Italian populism mean the continent is more likely to be a source of problems than a solution. Like generals fighting the last war, too many policymakers are focused on yesterday's problems. The global economy is much more likely to suffer from a

downturn than from overheating in the next two years. There is more likely to be too little credit flow than too much, asset price deflation is more probable than a bubble, and excess austerity is a bigger risk than profligacy. The critical challenge for monetary and fiscal policy will be to maintain sufficient demand amid immense geopolitical uncertainty, increasing protectionism, high accumulated debt levels, and structural and demographic factors leading to increased private saving and reduced private investment. The Fed should signal that it is determined to avoid a downturn, which would assure another decade of below-target inflation. The People's Bank of China and other central banks should also make it clear that they recognise that avoiding another recession is the most important thing they can contribute to financial stability. Fiscal policymakers should also realise that the very low real yield on government bonds is a signal

that more debt can be absorbed. It is not too soon to begin plans to launch large-scale infrastructure projects if a downturn comes. The largest economies should try to limit trade frictions and signal that they are committed to cooperating to support global growth by assuring adequate capital flows to emerging markets and avoiding a cycle of protectionism. Even if my recession fears are excessive, a shift towards emphasising growth will contribute to bringing inflation up to target levels and can be reversed. If I am proved right, the costs of delay in the policy response could be catastrophic. It is the irony of our moment that prudence requires the rejection of austerity. WASHINGTON POST

• Lawrence H. Summers is a professor at and past president of Harvard University. He was US Treasury secretary from 1999 to 2001 and an economic adviser to president Barack Obama from 2009 to 2010.



Mr. Jair Bolsonaro (left) and his wife Michele on their way to the Planalto Palace in Brasilia on Jan 1 this year for his inauguration as president of Brazil. The new leader of the largest country in Latin America has adopted several of the rhetorical themes of Trumpism, including denunciations of China, “globalism” and cultural elites. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Populism faces its darkest hour

But as its right-wing variant flags, the left-wing version could surge

Gideon Rachman

In 2016, the votes for Brexit and Mr Donald Trump stunned the political establishments in Britain and the United States. But 2019 stands a good chance of being the year that the populist project crumbles into incoherence, as it becomes increasingly clear that bad ideas have had consequences.

The optimistic claims made for Brexit in 2016 have already collapsed. British Prime Minister Theresa May’s deal with the European Union has been denounced as a betrayal by most of the erstwhile leaders of the Leave campaign. But a “no-deal” Brexit, which many Leavers now advocate, threatens to bring hardship and humiliation in its wake while a decision to hold a second referendum would be an even starker retreat from the peak populism of three years ago.

The prospects for the American branch of the populist project look no more appealing. President Trump’s poll ratings are sinking again and the stock market – his chosen measure of success – has plummeted. The Robert Mueller investigation will report soon and could trigger impeachment proceedings.

Perhaps most dangerously for the President, senior Republicans are getting restive following setbacks in the midterm elections and the resignation of Mr Jim Mattis as defence secretary.

But while it is tempting to argue that populism has peaked, it is also premature. There are three main

reasons for this. The first is that, although populist policies are running into trouble, the underlying economic and cultural forces that drove the movement are still there.

Second, populism comes in both right-wing and left-wing forms. While the right-wing version is struggling in the US and Britain, the left-wing variant could gather force this year.

The third reason is that populism is now a global phenomenon.

Populist politicians are in power from Brasilia to Budapest and from Rome to Manila. The Italian and Brazilian elections of 2018 were particularly significant. The governments of the largest country in Latin America and of a major western European nation are run by populist parties.

Mr Jair Bolsonaro, the President of Brazil, has adopted several of the rhetorical themes of Trumpism, including denunciations of China, “globalism” and cultural elites. But Mr Bolsonaro, unlike his North American role model, could have a honeymoon period this year, with business and consumer confidence rising, partly because of his promise of liberal economic reforms.

Mr Matteo Salvini, the face of Italian populism, could also have a good year. Italy seems to have averted a confrontation with the European Commission over the country’s budget deficit, and many Italians relish having a government that takes a more aggressive stance towards Brussels.

If Deputy Prime Minister Salvini’s League party does well in the elections to the European Parliament in May, he could trigger

an election at home, allowing the League to emerge as the dominant political force in Italy. The weakness of the country’s public finances means that Italian populism is vulnerable to a market-led backlash. But, for the moment, Mr Salvini’s stock is still rising.

Many populist leaders have heaped praise on Mr Trump. So the impeachment of the US President would have an effect on the morale of populists around the world, as would the implosion of Brexit.

But even if the Anglo-American advance guard of populism runs into trouble, the global forces driving the movement still look strong. Fear of migration, economic insecurity and cultural conservatism are still a potent cocktail. The appeal to a simpler-seeming past will continue to be made. Ms Damara Alves, the minister for women in the Bolsonaro government, vowed last week that in the new Brazil, “boys wear blue and girls wear pink”.

Cultural issues fuel the populism of the right. Meanwhile, the left-wing variant of populism will continue to stress minority rights and economics.

The coming year could prove to be fruitful for the left populists. The race to be the next Democratic nominee for the US presidency has begun. Most of the energy in the party seems to be on its “progressive” wing, exemplified by Ms Elizabeth Warren, Mr Bernie Sanders and Ms Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. These are politicians who attack the rich and privileged in a way that used to be taboo in mainstream US politics.

In Britain, the post-Brexit blues could easily present Mr Jeremy Corbyn with the chance to become prime minister. A Corbyn victory in Britain would inspire left-populists around the world, much as Brexit



Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, the face of Italian populism, could see his party emerge as the dominant political force in Italy. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

persuaded right-wing populists (including the Trump campaign) that history was moving in their direction.

The populism of the left has an important Latin American branch. The election of Mr Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador as president of Mexico last year was greeted enthusiastically by the far-left all over the world. Mr Corbyn is an old friend of Mr Lopez Obrador and was a guest of honour at his inauguration.

Pragmatic centrists will suspect that both the Mexican and Brazilian experiments with populism will ultimately fare about as well as Brexit and the Trump presidency. But the centre needs some new tunes. Politicians like France’s President Emmanuel Macron, whose response to populism is to play the old music, just louder, risk being drowned out.

Populism is in trouble, but the populist moment has not passed. FINANCIAL TIMES

Even if the Anglo-American advance guard of populism runs into trouble, the global forces driving the movement still look strong. Fear of migration, economic insecurity and cultural conservatism are still a potent cocktail. The appeal to a simpler-seeming past will continue to be made.

Western tech is ready to name the next Red Menace

Tim Culpan

Just as Western hawks learn how to pronounce “Huawei”, expect them to start uttering a more familiar name in the war against perceived Chinese espionage.

The Lenovo brand is stamped onto millions of desktops, laptops and smartphones worldwide. But it’s the Beijing-based company’s growing server business that’s likely to be the topic of conversation among Washington lobbyists seeking to leverage fears of the new Red Menace.

Since servers are at the centre of an enterprise’s proprietary data – storing information, managing files and handling data flow – their security is of utmost importance.

Most cyberhacks happen here. Lenovo Group’s enterprise unit, since renamed the Data Centre Group, hasn’t posted a profit for years, despite (or perhaps because of) its acquisition of an IBM server unit a few years ago.

In North America, though, revenue has climbed for the past six quarters. Globally, Lenovo’s server business is dwarfed by Dell Technologies and Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), yet it’s growing faster than both, according to data from the International Data Corporation.

Compatriots Inspur Group and Huawei Technologies are advancing at an even quicker pace, but Lenovo’s global size and name make for a more convenient bogeyman.

Dell and HPE would benefit from Lenovo being mentioned in the

Attaching the same label to Lenovo as Huawei has the potential to weaken their argument instead of strengthen it. If they’re unable to make a convincing case that Lenovo truly poses a cyber-security threat, then decision-makers, political and corporate, may be inclined to dismiss concerns over either company.

same breath as Huawei, regardless of whether it poses a similar threat to the huge networking equipment-maker – or any threat at all.

Already, I am hearing anecdotes that large American companies are leery of deploying Lenovo servers and any firm that seeks to win United States government contracts would be wise to heed the political winds. I haven’t confirmed any companies having turned away Lenovo due to its Chinese heritage – doing so publicly would reduce a buyer’s negotiating leverage with Dell and HPE as they award multimillion-dollar server contracts – but you can be sure that those US competitors will be reminding customers of the benefits of buying American.

Should any “Beware Lenovo” campaign gather momentum in the

US, then it would be an easy task to export the conversation to allied markets in Europe and Asia.

Those US lobbyists need to be wary, though. Attaching the same label to Lenovo as Huawei has the potential to weaken their argument instead of strengthen it.

If they’re unable to make a convincing case that Lenovo truly poses a cyber-security threat, then decision-makers, political and corporate, may be inclined to dismiss concerns over either company.

Moreover, this campaign won’t operate in a vacuum: China has a strong army of diplomatic and commercial hand-holders ready to walk through an explanation of why such fears are mere political trickery.

In an interview with the South

China Morning Post published on Monday, Lenovo chairman and chief executive Yang Yuanqing noted that the company is a global one, with operations and research and development in 160 countries.

It’s much more geographically diverse than Huawei, garnering just 25 per cent of sales domestically compared with Huawei’s 51 per cent. A series of Western acquisitions, including the Motorola phone brand in 2014, also makes it far less China-heavy.

So while it’s probably unfair to paint Lenovo in the same shade of red as Huawei, there’s a trade war going on. And as English poet John Lyly once wrote: All is fair in love and war. BLOOMBERG

• Tim Culpan is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering technology.

In Brexit Britain, taking back control means the opposite

Lionel Laurent

Prime Minister Theresa May likes to insist that her Brexit deal means Britain will “take back control” over its borders. But with just three months to go before the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, the very opposite is happening.

Control is being outsourced, not taken back. The money and skills needed to create Britain’s post-Brexit infrastructure are making the country more, not less, dependent on foreign help.

A French company, Gemalto, will print the UK’s new, patriotic blue passports. Another French business, Sopra Steria, will manage its visa and citizenship programme. France’s Vinci made it a hat-trick with its takeover of Gatwick Airport, through which 45 million people fly every year.

A charitable interpretation might be that Britain is a great trading nation open for business.

A less charitable one would be that as the hard reality of Brexit hits home, the UK’s stretched finances, slowing economy and weakened currency are pushing it to make awkward compromises. If foreign firms bring attractive price terms and investment, that’s a win for British taxpayers – but border infrastructure is a big trade-off.

There’s a growing sense of desperation, not pragmatism, as Britain struggles to deliver on its Brexit dream alone, especially as Mrs May scrambles to save her take-it-or-leave-it deal with Brussels. The messier Brexit gets, the more help from abroad becomes necessary.

Mrs May’s government recently awarded a £14 million (\$24 million) contract to a British company to provide extra ferries in case of a no-deal Brexit. The hitch is the firm has no ships and has never run such a service. It was the only bidder, the BBC said.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling tried to defend the move as supporting a new British business, but it still smacks of a lack of control, preparation and resources – not patriotism.

Other contracts were awarded to French and Danish ferry firms.

And for all Mrs May’s tough talk about ending freedom of movement and reclaiming sovereignty over Britain’s borders, her government’s biggest struggle over the holiday season was with non-EU migrants. Hundreds of people crossed the Channel to reach the UK in November, with Home Secretary Sajid Javid describing it as a “major incident”. He later called in the Royal Navy.

Yet given the border is in Calais, the likelier path is more cooperation with France: Britain has already agreed to spend more cash to maintain and strengthen the existing border, rather than move it to the UK. Cross-Channel investment and political cooperation may be good things, all in all. But if Brexit was supposed to be a show of independence and taking back control, it has yet to achieve it. BLOOMBERG

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
High 33 deg C **Low** 24 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 28 to 52 (Moderate)



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Blazing pink of incense village

In Vietnam's "incense village", dozens are hard at work dyeing, drying and whittling down bamboo bark to make the fragrant sticks ahead of the busy Tet, or Vietnamese new year, season.

It is the most frantic time of year for workers in the cottage industry in Quang Phu Cau village on the outskirts of Hanoi, where families have

been making incense for more than a century – a great source of pride for many. "It is a traditional and spiritual job making these sticks," Ms Dang Thi Hoa told Agence France-Presse, sitting amid bundles of bright pink incense sticks drying under the afternoon sun.

Most households in the alleys of Quang Phu Cau are involved in the

ancient trade. Some hack bamboo planks down to be fed into a whittling machine, while others dip the thin strips into buckets of pink dye, leaving hundreds of brightly coloured bushels fanned out like bouquets on the streets to air out.

The village is among several in Vietnam making the sticks, the scent of each batch tailored to the

tastes of regions they will be sold in. Like Ms Hoa, many earn good money making incense compared with factory work nearby.

By selling her sticks in central Vietnam, she can earn up to US\$430 (S\$584) a month leading up to Tet, a tidy sum in the country where the average monthly income is US\$195.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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BUSINESS

SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS' OPERATING INCOME IN LAST QUARTER, MISSING ANALYSTS' ESTIMATES **C5**



Golden Mile Complex was completed in 1973 and regarded as a landmark building because of its Brutalist architectural style. It is known for its distinctive step terrace. The building, which has 49 years left on its lease, launched a collective sale in October last year at a reserve price of \$800 million. The tender closes at 3pm on Jan 30. ST FILE PHOTO

Developers get more clarity on Golden Mile en bloc site

It may be developed as integrated project with 86,000 sq m GFA if main building is retained: URA

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

The iconic Golden Mile Complex may be developed as an integrated

project with a gross floor area (GFA) of 85,977.5 sq m if it finds a buyer, but its landmark main building will have to be retained, the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) said.

A collective sale of a largely conserved building like Golden Mile Complex is unprecedented here and one that may be challenging given the constraints that developers could face.

But the advice from the URA yes-

terday will likely make the site more attractive to potential buyers now, say analysts.

Golden Mile Complex was completed in 1973 and regarded as a landmark building because of its Brutalist architectural style. It is known for its distinctive step terrace.

The building, which has 49 years left on its lease, launched a collective sale in October last year at a reserve price of \$800 million. The

tender closes at 3pm on Jan 30.

Marketing agent Edmund Tie & Company said yesterday that the URA advice was in response to its outline application submitted in August last year to retain the existing Golden Mile Complex and to add a new block next to it.

"There is no plot ratio in the masterplan for Golden Mile Complex. As such, we filed an outline application to test planning parameters such as plot ratio and build-

The 718-unit commercial building sits on a 1.3ha land area and may be developed as an integrated development with retail, office, residential, serviced apartments and hotels. The differential premium to intensify the land use and the premium to top up the lease to 99 years will depend on the developer's proposed land use mix.

ing height," Edmund Tie senior director of investment advisory Swee Shou Fern told The Straits Times yesterday.

Savills Singapore research head Alan Cheong noted that the URA's advice on planning parameters helps "improve the saleability of the site because developers now know what they are getting into, or how much they can build".

"That's critical because the GFA determines how much the developer can sell or rent," he said.

The 718-unit commercial building sits on a 1.3ha land area and may be developed as an integrated development with retail, office, residential, serviced apartments and hotels.

The differential premium to intensify the land use and the premium to top up the lease to 99 years will depend on the developer's proposed land use mix.

DP Architects, the firm that designed Golden Mile Complex in the 1960s, was appointed consultant architect for the en bloc site.

The 68 residential unit owners stand to get a gross payout of between \$1.27 million and \$6 million each, while the 418 shop units could reap between \$200,000 and \$7 million each.

Owners of the 227 office units stand to get between \$360,000 and \$3 million each.

"The new Golden Mile Complex will be an essential part of the rejuvenation of the Beach Road corridor... Many exciting development concepts may be considered for the property," Ms Swee said.

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Condo resale prices resume slide, down 0.8% in December

After a small uptick in November, resale prices of private non-landed homes last month resumed the mild downtrend they have been in since last July's cooling measures, flash estimates by real estate portal SRX Property yesterday showed.

Condominiums and private apartment resale prices fell by 0.8 per cent last month from the previous month. This comes after a 0.3 per cent rise in November, slightly higher than the 0.2 per cent increase earlier estimated by SRX.

Resale prices of non-landed private homes are now down by 1.5 per cent from their peak in July last year, when property cooling measures were announced.

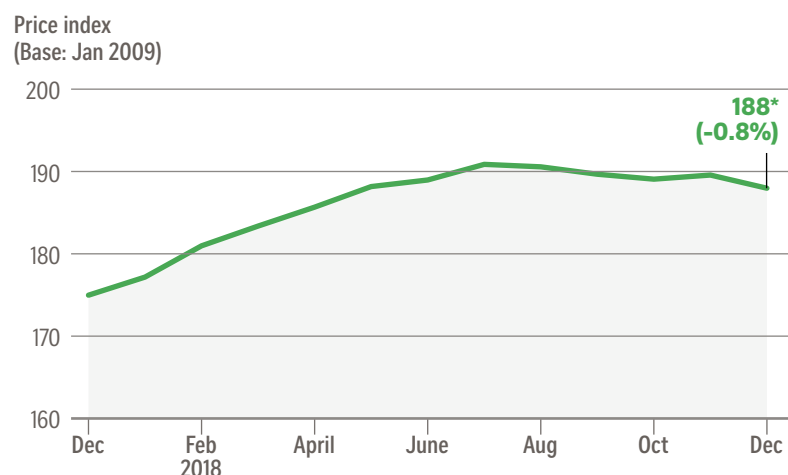
However, resale prices are still up from a year ago, being 7.5 per cent higher than in December 2017.

The cooling measures continued to also hit the volume of transactions. An estimated 479 non-landed private residential units were resold last month, a 24 per cent decrease from the 630 units resold in November. Year on year, transactions have fallen more sharply. The number of resales are down by 50.7 per cent from the 972 units moved in December 2017.

OrangeTee & Tie research and consultancy head Christine Sun noted that the recent cooling measures in July have "substantially stabilised" the price growth of private resale homes.

She said: "Resale prices have risen continuously in the first seven months of last year, posting a 7.7 per cent increase from January to July. After peaking in July, prices started to decline gradually. For the last five months of last year, resale prices fell

Non-landed private resale index



NOTE: "Flash estimate, month-on-month"

Source: SRX PROPERTY
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

1.4 per cent. Without the property cooling measures, the private resale market could have seen double-digit price growth last year."

She noted that the number of resale transactions last month was half the number sold year on year, and that the pullback in housing demand could be attributed to new project launches in recent months, as individual resellers will not be able to match the marketing and advertising strength of private developers.

Separately, SRX data showed that the premium which buyers were prepared to pay over market value stayed the same last month.

SRX's overall median transaction over X-value (TOX) was negative \$10,000 last month, unchanged from the previous month. TOX mea-

sures how much a buyer is overpaying or underpaying on a property based on SRX Property's computer-generated market value.

Among districts with more than 10 resale transactions, District 27's Yishun and Sembawang posted the highest median TOX of \$21,000, while District 15's Katong, Joo Chiat and Amber Road posted the lowest median TOX at negative \$80,000.

In terms of location, resale prices in the prime or core central region saw a month-on-month decrease of 1.8 per cent in December. Similarly, resale prices of non-landed homes in the city fringes, or rest of central region, fell by 0.5 per cent, while those in the suburbs inched down 0.6 per cent.



An artist's impression of Equinix's latest data centre in Singapore, which will be located in Tai Seng Industrial Estate. PHOTO: EQUINIX SG

Equinix investing \$116m to build fourth data centre in S'pore

Nasdaq-listed Equinix plans to build a fourth data centre in Singapore at an initial cost of US\$85.3 million (\$116 million).

The seven-storey facility in Tai Seng Industrial Estate, called SG4, is expected to open in the fourth quarter of this year.

The first phase of SG4 will provide more than 45,400 sq ft of co-location space, offering an initial capacity of 1,400 cabinets, the interconnection and data centre company said in a statement yesterday.

At full capacity, the data centre can provide more than 4,000 cabinets with a total co-location space of more than 132,180 sq ft.

The facility, to be directly connected to the three existing Equinix data centres here, will enable customers to securely interconnect

with about 600 firms from different industries, including financial services, cloud services, biomedical sciences, media, IT, communications, physical sciences and engineering.

It will also provide software-defined interconnection to more than 1,300 businesses, including some of the largest cloud service providers such as Alibaba Cloud, Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud Platform, Microsoft Azure, Oracle Cloud and Tencent Cloud.

Customers can find and connect to the aggregation of companies and ecosystems at Equinix on demand, locally or in other metro areas. This includes on-demand global connectivity to customers who are on Equinix's platforms.

Mr Samuel Lee, president of Equinix Asia-Pacific, said: "At the heart of digital business in Asia-Pacific, Singapore is a crucial hub for many organisations in the region, generating skyrocketing demand for cloud and interconnection services.

"With interconnection accelerating across the Asia-Pacific region, the new SG4 data centre will create more opportunities for businesses, both locally and regionally, to interconnect with their customers, partners and stakeholders to achieve digital success, further enhancing the digital economies across Singapore and the region."

According to a market study published by Equinix, Singapore's interconnection bandwidth capacity – a measurement of direct and private data exchange between businesses – is expected to more than quadruple by 2021, reaching 394 terabytes per second at a compound annual growth rate of 47 per cent.

Currently, Equinix has 200 data centres across 52 markets and 24 countries, providing services for more than 9,800 businesses. In the Asia-Pacific, Equinix has 40 data centres across key cities in countries including Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan and Singapore.

At full capacity, the data centre can provide more than 4,000 cabinets with a total co-location space of more than 132,180 sq ft.

Egg firm Chew's eyes new name and businesses

Egg firm Chew's Group will be a Singapore egg business no more.

The company said yesterday that it would seek shareholders' approval to change its name and diversify its business, following the cessation of its business of producing and selling generic and designer eggs as well as liquid eggs, trading of spent grains and food processing in Singapore.

This comes after it completed the sale of four units: Chew's Agriculture, Chew's Engineering Services, Chew's Group Investment and Chew's Group Marketing.

Its only remaining subsidiary is Chew's Food International, whose core business is the trading of generic and designer eggs and other food products in Hong Kong.

The firm is proposing to convene an extraordinary general meeting to obtain its shareholders' approval to change its name to OneApex and to diversify into the property and financial investment services businesses.

Chew's Group said the property business would consist of investments in various properties for rental income and/or capital growth; the management of various properties, with a focus on hotels, hostels and food and beverage outlets; and property development activities including the acquisition, development and/or sale of commercial and residential properties and hotels.

The company said it intends to focus its efforts in Singapore, initially, "because the management team is familiar with and has a wide network of business associates to leverage in seeking out profitable opportunities in Singapore's property industry".

As for financial investment services, it intends to go into fund management, wealth management and family office advisory services.



(From left) Singapore's Ambassador to China Stanley Loh, Manpower Minister Josephine Teo, Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing, Senior Minister of State for Health and Transport Lam Pin Min and Enterprise Singapore chief executive Png Cheong Boon at the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative Joint Implementation Committee meeting in Chongqing yesterday. ST PHOTO: CHONG KOH PING

S'pore, Chongqing to boost trade flows, data exchange

Such integration will help businesses as new China-S-E Asia trade route shapes up: Chan Chun Sing

Chong Koh Ping
China Correspondent
In Chongqing

Singapore is working with Chongqing to integrate data exchange and smoothen trade flows as the new trade route that connects western China and South-east Asia takes shape, said Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing.

"It's not just about the physical connectivity, it's also about the non-physical dimensions of how we integrate our processes to allow

our businesses a much better environment to do their business," he said yesterday at the close of a two-day visit to the south-western city of Chongqing.

The new land and sea trade route comprises a network of railway links from western China to the Qinzhou port in southern Guangxi, which further connects to South-east Asia via sea. It takes about one week to transport goods using this new route instead of three weeks via the Yangtze River, yet the costs are roughly the same.

This trade link extends from the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI), the third joint project between China and Singapore that aims to spur the growth of China's less-developed western region.

The project centres on improving transport, financing and data connectivity within the region, as well as between the region and the world.

Mr Chan credited the Chongqing officials for "working very hard" to bring more neighbouring provinces to join the trade network.

Eight western provinces and autonomous regions are now part of the network, including four - Qinghai, Xinjiang, Ningxia and Yunnan - that officially joined on Monday.

"By bringing in more partners, we are able to more rapidly lower the costs of financing and the costs of logistics. So the more companies

INTEGRATING 'SOFTWARE'

It's not just about the physical connectivity, it's also about the non-physical dimensions of how we integrate our processes to allow our businesses a much better environment to do their business.

”

TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER CHAN CHUN SING, on going beyond improving physical connectivity.

GOING BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

The new trade route has surpassed expectations in terms of its demonstrative effects, innovativeness as well as its ability to spur development.

”

CHONGQING MAYOR TANG LIANGZHI, on the impact of the new trade route.

join in, the more neighbouring provinces join in, the better it is for us to reduce the costs," Mr Chan told Singapore reporters.

And beyond building a network of hardware in terms of roads and railways, both sides are now working together to integrate the "software" aspects, such as the Customs clearance processes.

"All these will require efforts on both sides to make it a seamless environment for our businesses. So I think that kind of integration will bring our bilateral cooperation in this project and elsewhere to a next higher plane," Mr Chan said.

Yesterday, Mr Chan and Chongqing Mayor Tang Liangzhi co-chaired an implementation meeting for the CCI.

Mr Tang noted that the CCI has seen more than 60 new innovative policy measures implemented, and brought Singapore and Chongqing companies together for some 140 projects with total investment value of US\$21.9 billion (S\$29.7 billion).

"The new trade route has surpassed expectations in terms of its demonstrative effects, innovativeness as well as its ability to spur development," said Mr Tang to officials from Chongqing and Singapore as well as representatives from the Chinese Commerce, Foreign Affairs, and Industry and Information Technology ministries.

Earlier yesterday, Mr Chan attended a forum to discuss the new trade route. He urged officials from Asean to consider using the new route to export to the western regions of China as the shortened transport time opens up opportunities for new products, including perishable produce.

Greater regional integration, through the new trade route, will help bring about a better quality of life for the people, he added.

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Nine deals inked, spanning areas such as fintech, financial services

CHONGQING • Singapore and Chongqing companies yesterday inked nine deals in such areas as fintech, financial services and technology.

Singapore's Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing and Chongqing Mayor Tang Liangzhi witnessed the signing of the memorandums of understanding at a ceremony before the start of the 4th Joint Implementation Committee meeting for the Chongqing Connectivity Initiative (CCI).

Launched more than three years ago in November 2015, the CCI is the third joint project between Singapore and China, and aims to help spur development in western China through better

transport, financing and data connectivity.

The signing also saw companies from both sides expanding beyond these priority sectors into other areas of cooperation, including healthcare and township development.

Mr Chan and Mr Tang also witnessed the inauguration ceremony for the Sino-Singapore Airport Commercial Management, a joint venture between Changi Airports International (CAI) and the Chongqing Airport Group to manage the non-aeronautical businesses at Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport.

The new company will focus on enhancing the commercial land-

scape by introducing experiential concepts that promote a sense of place, as well as new product categories and brands, said CAI in a statement.

It will also manage airport facilities like the carpark, and advertising in the terminals.

CAI holds a 49 per cent stake in the new company and Chongqing Airport Group, the rest.

Said CAI chief executive Lim Liang Song: "Chongqing Jiangbei International Airport is a major aviation hub for airlines in western China and we are honoured to be able to play a part in defining its commercial experience."

Chong Koh Ping

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Singtel Dash e-remittance service opens to Myanmar users

Those in Singapore can use service from March, in drive to boost financial inclusivity

Aw Cheng Wei

Myanmar nationals in Singapore will be able to send money home using mobile wallet Singtel Dash from March, under a new grant agreement signed yesterday.

Singtel will work with banks, mobile wallets and cash pick-up services in Myanmar to set up safe and affordable ways for recipients to withdraw their money, as part of the three-year agreement between the telco and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF).

The initiative aims to improve ac-

cess to formal and legitimate remittance channels for Myanmar citizens as part of the UNCDF's Shaping Inclusive Finance Transformations (Shift) programme, Singtel said.

The programme promotes financial inclusivity in the least developed countries in the Mekong region and South Asia.

Singtel noted that many people in Myanmar currently receive money through "informal channels such as unlicensed agents, which could be time-consuming, expensive and unsafe".

According to a World Bank report, Myanmar nationals working abroad sent home some US\$6.2 bil-



From left: Singtel Group CEO Chua Sock Koong, Singtel International CEO Arthur Lang, Senior Parliamentary Secretary Low Yen Ling, UNCDF Shift programme manager for Asean & SAARC Rajeev Kumar Gupta, and Singtel Consumer Singapore CEO Yuen Kuan Moon, at yesterday's signing ceremony of a grant agreement to mark a partnership to promote financial inclusion in Asean by introducing remittances to Myanmar through Singtel Dash. ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAUDHARY

lion (\$S8.4 billion) in 2017. More than 180,000 currently live or work in Singapore.

Singtel Dash users can send money to the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh and China.

Users do not need to subscribe to Singtel's telephone or broadband services to use it.

Singtel's International chief executive Arthur Lang said its initiative in Myanmar serves "both the domestic and cross-border needs of our customers".

"This sets us apart from the myr-

riad of mobile wallets available in Singapore," he added.

Currently, more than 250 million adults in Asean do not have bank accounts, Mr Lang said, adding: "With the rapidly growing number of smartphone users, we see tremendous opportunities to provide financial services at affordable rates to people and small businesses in the region."

Remittance rates will be competitive, he said.

Ms Win Mong, 23, a foreign domestic worker from Myanmar who

has been working in Singapore for two years, hopes to use the service so she does not have to wait at a remittance agency at Lucky Plaza.

"Travelling to Orchard Road from my (workplace) can take about 40 minutes, and it's another 10 minutes' waiting time," she said.

The new agreement is also in line with Singtel's push to lead the growing but fragmented e-payment market as it looks to grow in new areas.

According to its latest company results published in November, Singtel's second-quarter net profit

last year plunged 77 per cent on the previous year to \$667 million, its lowest quarterly earnings in 15 years.

Last October, Singtel launched a cross-border digital payment network that allows anyone with Singtel Dash to pay for items outside Singapore.

The network kicked off with more than 1.6 million merchants in Thailand, and is expected to roll out in other countries such as Indonesia, India and the Philippines.

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S'pore firms' payment performance dips for third straight quarter

The last quarter of 2018 saw a deterioration in local firms' payment performance for three straight quarters, and more companies were also slow in payment compared with the last quarter a year ago, according to the Singapore Commercial Credit Bureau (SCCB).

SCCB in a statement issued yesterday said prompt payments slid 4.48 percentage points quarter on quarter to 43.83 per cent of total payment transactions, while slow payments saw an improvement as there was a 0.92 percentage point dip to 38.02 per cent of total payment transactions.

Partial payments increased by 5.41 percentage points to 18.15 per cent in the fourth quarter of last

Manufacturing, wholesale slower in payment

Sector	% of slow payments		% point change		
	Q4 2018	Q3 2018	Q4 2017	Q-O-Q	Y-O-Y
Construction	43.23	47.28	56.83	-4.05	-13.6
Manufacturing	38.98	37.82	39.3	1.16	-0.32
Retail	41.75	44.11	27.56	-2.36	14.19
Services	35.99	36.7	37.84	-0.71	-1.85
Wholesale	35.64	35.29	34.72	0.35	0.92

Source: SINGAPORE COMMERCIAL CREDIT BUREAU STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

year from 12.74 per cent in the third quarter.

From a year-on-year perspective, prompt payments dropped by 6.57 percentage points, while slow payments increased by 1.1 percentage points. Partial payments rose by 5.47 percentage points.

Prompt payment refers to when 90 per cent or more of total bills are paid within the agreed payment terms, while slow payment is defined as when less than 50 per cent of total bills are paid within the agreed terms. Partial payment refers to when between 50 and 90 per cent of total bills are paid within the agreed payment terms.

Among the five sectors, manufacturing and wholesale experienced

slight dips in quarter-on-quarter payment performance. In contrast, the construction, services and retail sectors saw improvements.

The deterioration in payment performance in the manufacturing sector was a result of an increase in payment delays by manufacturers of petroleum and coal products, machinery and apparels.

Payment delays within the wholesale sector was due to an increase in such delays within the wholesale trade of durable goods.

D&B Singapore compiles the figures by monitoring more than 1.6 million payment transactions of firms operating through SCCB. Payment data is contributed to the bureau by local firms.

Temasek said to be weighing options for its AS Watson stake

Temasek bought the stake in AS Watson, which is a unit of Hong Kong tycoon Victor Li's CK Hutchison Holdings, for HK\$44 billion (\$\$7.6 billion) in 2014. At the time, AS Watson's owner said it planned to list the retailer in the next two to three years in Hong Kong and Singapore, pushing back an earlier 2014 target for an initial public offering.

Temasek is exploring options for its stake in global retailer AS Watson Group, including a partial sale, people with knowledge of the matter said.

Singapore's investment company is working with an adviser to consider possibilities for its 25 per cent holding in AS Watson after receiving some preliminary interest, said the sources, who asked not to be identified.

It bought the stake in AS Watson, which is a unit of Hong Kong tycoon Victor Li's CK Hutchison Holdings, for HK\$44 billion (\$\$7.6 billion) in 2014.

At the time, AS Watson's owner said it planned to list the retailer in the next two to three years in Hong Kong and Singapore, pushing back an earlier 2014 target for an initial public offering (IPO). "Temasek bought AS Watson on

the expectation that it would go public soon," Mr Steven Leung, executive director at UOB Kay Hian (Hong Kong), said on Monday. "Now that the IPO hope is fading, it's understandable why Temasek seeks to sell down its stake."

Deliberations are at an early stage and there is no certainty they will lead to a transaction, the sources said.

A spokesman for Temasek said it does not comment on rumours or speculation.

A representative for CK Hutchison declined to comment.

AS Watson accounted for 37 per cent of CK Hutchison's HK\$224.5 billion of revenue for the six months ended last June, the most of any division, its interim report shows. Its health and beauty businesses helped the unit's sales rise 14 per cent year on year, according to the report.

The retailer has more than 14,500 stores in 24 markets, including its Superdrug chain in Britain and Rossmann pharmacies in Germany, according to its website.

It also runs the Watsons chain of healthcare and beauty shops across Asia, as well as groceries, electronics shops and wine stores in its home market of Hong Kong. BLOOMBERG

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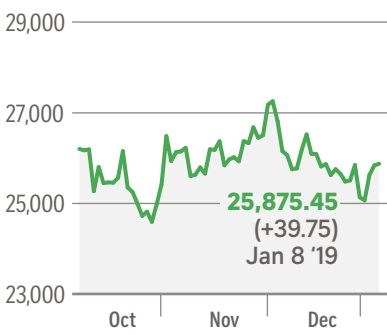
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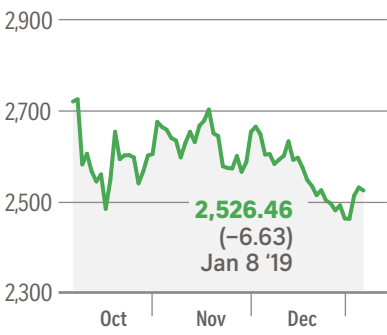
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NOTICES

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BullsAndBears

STI bucks trend as regional cheer fades

Index up 0.65% with lenders leading way; investors cautious on US-China trade talks

Lynette Tan

The cheery mood among many regional investors lasted only a day, with Monday's gains mostly wiped out yesterday, although local shares bucked the trend.

Nervy investors remained cautious as they held out for a breakthrough in trade talks between the United States and China, but the sentiment here was a bit lighter.

The Straits Times Index rose 20.14 points, or 0.65 per cent, to 3,122.94, with gainers beating losers 207 to 170, on turnover of 1.3 billion shares worth \$880.4 million.

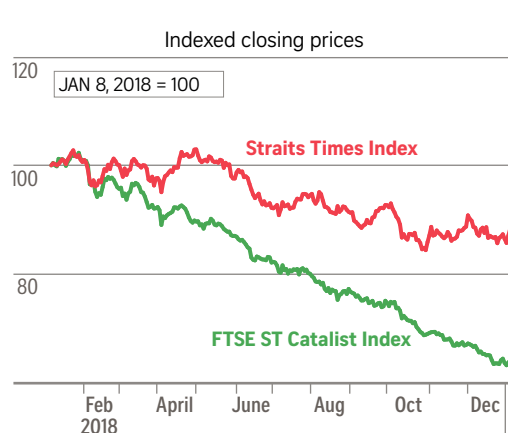
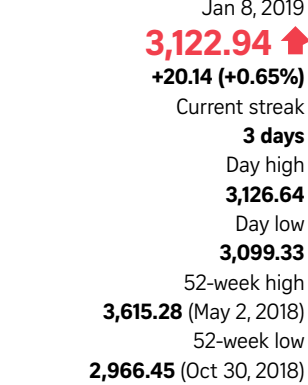
Local lenders did the heavy lifting: DBS was up 0.67 per cent to \$23.91; OCBC Bank put on 1.14 per cent to \$11.50; and United Overseas Bank advanced 0.88 per cent to \$25.17.

Other index heavyweights also chipped in, with conglomerate Jardine Cycle & Carriage ahead 1.09 per cent to \$36.09, while retailer Dairy Farm International Holdings was 2.33 per cent higher at US\$9.22.

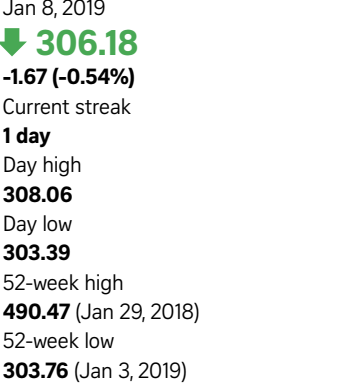
Trade remains the hot topic among investors everywhere. The Trump administration has expressed optimism that it can reach a "reasonable" deal with China.

That could involve the Chinese buying more US soya beans and liquefied natural gas, while agreeing to deeper "structural reforms" on con-

Straits Times Index



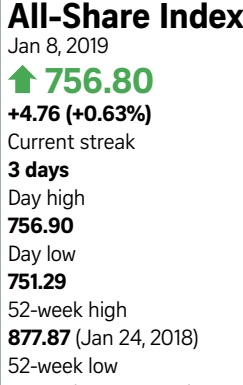
FTSE ST Catalyst Index



Indexed closing prices



FTSE ST All-Share Index



tentious issues such as intellectual property rights and market access.

But Nomura Securities strategist Masanari Takada is wary, telling Reuters: "Many investors are still trying to play it safe and it is yet to be seen whether the recovery continues or ends up as a short-term relief rally."

There is plenty of caution around technology stocks, too, with analysts concerned about profit warnings in the upcoming fourth-quarter earnings season.

Just last week, tech giant Apple lowered its profit guidance for the first time in more than a decade.

Maybank Kim Eng analyst Lai Gene Lih said: "We are lowering target prices across Singapore technology coverage to factor in cuts to our earnings forecasts amid heightened macro-uncertainty."

Tech and semiconductor counters fell yesterday. AEM Holdings lost 1.14 per cent to 87 cents, UMS Holdings declined 1.68 per cent to 58.5 cents, and Excelpoint dipped 0.85 per cent, also to 58.5 cents.

Mr Lai remains neutral on the tech sector and prefers firms with stronger resilience to the trade war and other uncertainties, such as Venture Corp (target price \$17.48) and Valuetronics (90 cents).

Venture declined 1.18 per cent to \$14.27 yesterday, while Valuetronics closed unchanged at 69 cents.

Mr Lai noted that Venture might even benefit from the trade war because of its South-east Asian-centric production footprint.

tanlyn@sph.com.sg

Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Trust	265	+1	10132	6	1.3
200	161	CapitaCom Trust	178	-2	9732	4.9	1
388	298	Capitaland	318	+4	5359	3.8	0.7
232	195	CapitaMall Trust	232	+2	10530	4.8	1.1
1360	780	CityDev	849	+15	2216	2.1	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	217	+1	6362	4.8	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2391	+16	3119	6	1.4
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US922	+21	378	2.3	-
141	85.5	Genting Sing	101	-1	14119	3.5	1.6
39	22.5	HPH Trust USD	US25	unch	7587	3.2	0.6
42	23	HongkongLand USD	US25	+0.5	4569	10.5	0.4
744	588	JMH USD	US670	+11	1987	3	0.3
6958	5580	JSH USD	US6788	-62	228	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	Jardine C&C	US3759	-24	118	0.9	0.4
426	2766	Keppel Corp	3609	+39	573	3.2	1.8
892	567	OCBC Bank	616	+7	2709	3.6	1
1404	1036	SATS	1150	+13	5492	3.2	1.2
585	455	SGX	488	+19	4185	3.7	3.4
472	314	SIA	727	+1	1386	4.1	8.4
1184	914	SPH	939	+4	975	4.3	0.8
292	231	ST Engineering	247	+8	939	5.3	1.9
370	319	Sembcorp Ind	355	+4	2949	4.2	5.2
360	243	Singtel	207	+1	13982	5.5	0.9
365	283	StarHub	174	-2	2301	9.2	5.3
94.5	57.5	StarhillGbl Reit	68.5	+0.5	6515	6.6	0.8
3037	2380	UOB	2517	+22	1635	4	1.2
938	591	UOL	631	+3	780	2.8	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1427	-17	927	4.2	1.8
331	297	Wilmar Intl	316	-3	5454	3.2	0.9
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	127	unch	18002	3.5	0.9

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	265	+1	10132	6	1.3
127	105	Ascott Reit	110	+1	1044	6.4	0.9
78.5	59	Bumitama Agri	64.5	+0.5	133	12	1.5
185	143	CDL HTrust	149	+1	961	-	1
200	161	CapitaCom Trust	178	-2	9732	4.9	1
388	298	Capitaland	318	+4	5359	3.8	0.7
232	195	CapitaMall Trust	232	+2	10530	4.8	1.1
1360	780	CityDev	849	+15	2216	2.1	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	217	+1	6362	4.8	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2391	+16	3119	6	1.4
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US922	+21	378	2.3	-
78	59	Far East HTrust	61	unch	607	-	0.7
197	150	First Resources	160	+5	757	4.3	2.1
236	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	219	-2	1503	5.3	1.1
119	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	104	unch	2838	6.6	1.1
141	85.5	Genting Sing	101	-1	14119	3.5	1.6
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	25	unch	7587	3.2	0.6
234	167	GuocoLand Ltd	180	unch	184	3.9	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US25	+0.5	4569	10.5	0.4
744	588	JMH USD	US670	+11	1987	3	0.3
6958	5580	JSH USD	US6788	-62	228	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	Jardine C&C	US3759	-24	118	0.9	0.4
426	2766	Keppel Corp	3609	+39	573	3.2	1.8
59	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	49.5	unch	3713	7.5	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	616	+7	2709	3.6	1
133	108	Keppel Reit	117	+1	3739	4.9	0.8
215	151	Man Oriental USD	207	+1	13982	5.5	0.9
273	170	Mapletree Com Tr	171	+3	5690	5.3	1.1
213	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	194	unch	1335	6.1	1.3
138	118	Mapletree Log Tr	130	-1	8114	5.9	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	116	+2	6415	6.4	0.9
84	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77.5	+0.5	3449	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1150	+13	5492	3.2	1.2
215	136	OUE	146	+1	76	21	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUE HTrust	67.5	+0.5	997	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	173	-1	173	4.3	0.9
60.8	28	Oxley	28.5	unch	574	5.3	0.8
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	270	+5	440	4.9	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	110	unch	1400	2	2.6
585	455	SATS	488	+19	4185	3.7	3.4
850	672	SGX	727	+1	1386	4.1	8.4
1184	914	SIA	939	+4	975	4.3	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	247	+8	939	5.3	1.9
292	231	SPH	249	+9	7400	5.2	1.2
109	98	SPHREIT	103	cd	561	5.4	1.1
370	319	ST Engineering	355	+4	2949	4.2	5.2
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	355	+1	1561	1.9	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	162	+2	5876	1.2	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	40.5	-0.5	13779	7.4	5.9
147	88.5	SingPost	94	+1.5	1965	3.7	1.3
365	283	Singtel	294	unch	17815	7	1.7
299	158	StarHub	174	-2	2301	9.2	5.3
78	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	68.5	+0.5	6515	6.6	0.8
225	163	Suntec Reit	183	+1	4227	5.5	0.9
94.5	57.5	ThaiBev	63	cd	37939	1	3.1
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.8	+0.2	27209	-	2.8
3037	2380	UOB	2517	+22	1635	4	1.2
938	591	UOL	631	+3	780	2.8	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1427	-17	927	4.2	1.8
331	297	Wilmar Intl	316	-3	5454	3.2	0.9
244	183	Wing Tai	196	unch	148	4.1	0.5
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	127	unch	18002	3.5	0.9
191	116	Yanlord Land	126	-1	205	5.4	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	135	+1	673	7.6	1
71	48	Accordia Golf Tr	54	+2	705	7.1	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	79	+0.5	291	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	106	-2	414	5.8	1.2
59.5	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.4	-0.4	2199	48.5	0.2
67	48	Banyan Tree	58	unch	184	17	0.8
279	115	Best World	256	-7	4013	1.6	9.2
87.5	76	Boustead	80	+1	89	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	86	+1.5	242	8.1	2.3
658	521	Bukit Sembawang	563	-1	8	3.2	1.1
88.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	71.5	+0.5	1708	10.1	1
57	39.5	Centurion	40.5	-0.5	371	6.2	0.7
171	104	China Aviation	109	unch	679	4.1	0.9
47.5	29.5	China Everbright	31	unch	103	1.6	0.6
165	90.5	China Sunshine	125	unch	649	2.4	1.4
107	64	Chip Eng Seng	67.5	-0.5	2126	5.9	0.5
53.5	31.5	Cosco	34.5	unch	4411	-	15
700	302	Delong	603	-2	23	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	19.9	-0.1	0	9.3	1.3
79	67.5	EC World Reit	70	unch	228	8.6	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	52	+0.5	5972	7.4	0.9
142	92	First Reit	102	+2	575	8.4	1
155	134	Fraser's Com Tr	140	+2	834	6.9	0.9
82.5	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	71.5	+1	766	-	0.9
28	16.4	Geo Energy Res	18	-0.2	288	5.6	1.1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	79	+0.5	10	2.9	2.4
70	52	Health Mgt Intl	54	-1.5	164	0.6	5.2
279	73	Hi-P Intl	92	-4.5	10447	27.2	1.4
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	260	+3	71	5	0.6
82.5	71	IREIT Global	73.5	unch	0	8.1	1
42	18.3	Indofood Agri	19.7	+0.3	285	-	0.2
79.5	43	Japfa	75	-0.5	2031	0.7	1.4
84.5	49	KSH	50.5	-0.5	8	4.4	0.9
86.9	53	Kep-KBS Reit USD	66.5	+1	1072	-	0.6
148	128	Keppel DC Reit	138	+1	1304	5.2	1.4
188	132	Keppel T&T	186	unch	727	1.9	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	8	+0.2	21713	-	1
79.5	44.5	Lian Beng	47	unch	252	4.8	0.3
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	20.5	+1	1773	16.8	0.7
55.5	30	MM2 Asia	31.5	+1	1097	-	1.8
98.5	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	83	+1	531	6.7	0.7
121	95	Metro	100	-	-	5	0.6
32	5	Noble	81	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	OUE Com Reit	46.5	unch	646	10	0.5
68	54	PEC	58	-1	11	3.4	0.

Wall Street firms plan rival to NYSE, Nasdaq

Shares of bourses' parent firms down on news of new exchange

NEW YORK • Morgan Stanley, Fidelity Investments, Citadel Securities and a host of other financial companies plan to launch a low-cost bourse that will compete with the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) and Nasdaq.

Brokers and traders have complained for years about what they say are unjustifiably high fees charged by the big US stock exchanges for data on stock trades.

The news of the new exchange on Monday pushed down the share prices of the parent companies of the NYSE and Nasdaq.

"The announcement is the latest salvo in the ongoing fee battle between exchanges and other market participants, and one which should be taken seriously at least from the perspective of the potential earnings pressure on existing exchanges," said Mr Nathan Flanders of Fitch Ratings.

In a joint statement on Monday, the companies creating the new exchange said it would look to increase competition, improve operational transparency, reduce fixed costs and simplify equity trading in the United States.

Data fees are one of the biggest costs for brokers.

The venture will be called Members Exchange, or MEMX, and will be funded and controlled by nine in-

stitutions: Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Charles Schwab Corp, E*TRADE Financial Corp, TD Ameritrade Holding Corp, UBS, Virtu Financial, Morgan Stanley, Fidelity and Citadel.

This is not the first time that industry giants have taken on the established exchanges.

Last year, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) asked stock exchanges to do a better job justifying their fees for public market data. It also repealed two data price changes for public feeds for Nasdaq- and NYSE-listed securities for the first time.

MEMX, which plans to offer a simple trading model with basic order types and the latest technology, will also represent the interests of

its founders' collective client base of retail and institutional investors.

It will offer "lower pricing on market data, and connectivity and transaction fees," it said.

The big three US exchanges have faced criticism for surging fees for services like data feeds that brokers use to monitor movements in stock prices. Intercontinental Exchange (ICE) owns the NYSE, Nasdaq is run by Nasdaq Inc and the other exchange is Cboe.

Shares of ICE were down 2.6 per cent and those of Nasdaq Inc were 2.8 per cent lower.

MEMX will file an application with the SEC early this year seeking approval to operate as a national securities exchange, according to the statement.

The World Federation of Exchanges (WFE) hit back against criticism of bourses on Monday, saying price feeds would not exist but for the role they play.

"The price at which information is licensed is accordingly a commercial matter for each individual consumer and exchange.

"The WFE stands ready to assist any regulators who are concerned about the role and nature of market data," the WFE said. REUTERS

Oil extends longest rally in 17 months on Opec cuts

LONDON • Oil extended its longest run of daily gains in 17 months on renewed efforts between the United States and China to reach a trade deal and expectations that the market will be tightened by Opec's output cuts.

Futures in New York rose as much as 1.6 per cent on Monday following six days of gains, the longest streak of increases since July 2017.

There's a "very good chance" the US gets a reasonable deal with China, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told CNBC on Monday, as trade negotiations began in Beijing.

Meanwhile, expectations for a nationwide decline in US crude inventories alleviated worries about a supply glut.

Crude is seeing a tentative recovery after fears of oversupply and weakening global growth drove prices to their worst annual slump since 2015.

Futures are rebounding as the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and its allies start their pledged production cuts this month, led by Saudi Arabia, and after the US Federal Reserve signalled a hold in interest rate hikes that had spurred risk aversion and volatility across global financial markets.

"Saudi Arabia will continue to be the decisive factor for the markets this year, just as they were last year," said Mr Eugen Weinberg, head of commodities research at Commerzbank in Frankfurt.

"They can be very convincing when they choose to be. And so we see the potential for Brent crude to go to US\$70 a barrel over the course of the year."

West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for February delivery increased as much as 77 US cents to US\$49.29 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Prices rose 8.8 per cent for six sessions up until Monday.

Brent for March settlement gained 97 US cents to US\$58.30 a barrel on the ICE Futures Europe Exchange in London. The contract closed 0.5 per cent higher at US\$57.33 on Monday. The global benchmark crude traded at an US\$8.66 a barrel premium to WTI for the same month.

Investor confidence grew as trade talks showed signs of progress. "There is a confluence of factors helping – a big driver is progress in trade talks and hopes that global growth will be supported," said Mr Stephen Innes, head of trading for the Asia-Pacific at Oanda Corp. "The Fed's easier stance and Opec's commitment to cut production as well as expectations that inventories should drop are lending a hand to this positive investor sentiment."

American crude stockpiles probably declined by 1.75 million barrels last week, according to a median estimate in a Bloomberg survey of analysts ahead of US government data today. US inventories are near their lowest level in almost two months. BLOOMBERG

Samsung Electronics' operating income fell to 10.8 trillion won (\$13 billion) in the quarter that ended last month, according to preliminary results released yesterday, falling short of the 13.8 trillion won average of analysts' estimates compiled by Bloomberg. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



Samsung shares Apple's pain in tech slowdown

SEOUL • Samsung Electronics' quarterly profit and revenue missed estimates on sputtering demand for memory chips during the last three months of 2018, the same period when Apple saw anaemic sales in China.

The South Korean company's operating income fell to 10.8 trillion won (\$13 billion) in the quarter that ended last month, according to preliminary results released yesterday, falling short of the 13.8 trillion won average of analysts' estimates compiled by Bloomberg.

Deteriorating relations between the United States and China – Samsung's two biggest export destinations – have hit demand for memory used in everything from personal computers to mobile devices, raising the pressure on a company struggling to revitalise its smartphone business.

Compounding that challenge is weakness at Apple, a major customer of components. The iPhone maker stunned global markets last week when it cut its sales outlook for the first time in almost two decades.

"It's a shock," analyst Song Myung-sup at HI Investment & Securities said of Samsung's results.

"It's not just Apple, but also smartphone, server and PC manufacturers that are not buying. While the US-China trade war hangs over them, these customers just won't accept current prices, and Samsung faces pressure to cut chip prices."

Fourth-quarter revenue fell 11 per cent to 59 trillion won, compared with the 63.6 trillion won average projection compiled by Bloomberg.

Samsung's shares fell 1.7 per cent in Seoul. The stock dropped 24 per cent last year.

Memory chips account for the biggest portion of Samsung's profit. Contract prices for 32GB DRAM server modules fell about 5 per cent in the December quarter, according to InSpectrum Tech. Prices for 128GB MLC NAND flash memory chips fell about 3.4 per cent.

Apple's surprise cut to its sales forecast last week suggested a worsening outlook for orders. Apple receives memory chips and smartphone screens from Samsung and is the South Korean manufacturer's

biggest customer, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

Samsung said it expects earnings to remain subdued in the first three months of the year due to difficult conditions for memory. Profitability will recover in the second half, the company predicted, on projected improvements in the market, with rising adoption of new central processing units and launches of new smartphone products.

While Samsung still leads the world in smartphone sales, it is being squeezed by Chinese handset makers like Huawei Technologies.

The South Korean company is pinning its hopes on a foldable-screen phone that it plans to ship this year, along with a flagship Galaxy S10 model that is said to feature an in-display fingerprint sensor and a near-zero bezel.

Mr Sanjeev Rana, a Korea technology analyst at CLSA, said, "In the second quarter, Samsung launches the Galaxy S10 and a lot of other Android makers announce new model launches that might help smartphone demand and enhance the demand for DRAM." BLOOMBERG

Interbank currency rates

Jan 8				
Currencies	Against \$ Bid	Offer	Against US\$ Bid	Offer
S\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9679	0.9684	0.7125	0.7126
Canadian dollar	1.0226	1.0230	0.7528	0.7528
Euro	1.5541	1.5550	1.1441	1.1443
NZ dollar	0.9149	0.9158	0.6735	0.6739
Sterling pound	1.7325	1.7337	1.2754	1.2758
US dollar	1.3584	1.3589	-	-
S\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	19.8035	19.8148	14.5785	14.5815
Danish kroner	20.8117	20.8225	15.3207	15.3231
Hong Kong dollar	17.33	17.34	12.7575	12.7579
Indian Rupee	194	194	14.272	14.274
Indonesia rupiah	0.0096	0.0096	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	124.70	124.76	0.9180	0.9181
Korean won	0.1205	0.1208	0.0887	0.0889
Malaysian ringgit	3.298	3.303	24.2777	24.3072
New Taiwan dollar	4.3985	4.4044	3.2380	3.2412
Nonregian kronr	15.8794	15.8945	11.6898	11.6966
Philippine peso	25.874	25.898	19.048	19.063
Saudi riyal	36.2134	36.2306	26.6588	26.6617
Swedish krona	15.2376	15.2483	11.2173	11.2211
Swiss franc	138.4558	138.5643	101.9264	101.9680
Thai Baht	4.2318	4.2360	3.1153	3.1172

OBITUARIES

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

"I have done my best in the race, I have run the full distance, and I have kept the faith. And now there is waiting for me the victory prize of being put right with God, which the Lord, the righteous Judge will give me on that Day..."
2 Timothy 4:7-8



Anthony Wee Thian Lee

Age: 92

Was called home to be with the Lord on 8 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Lily Khoo Guay Tin

Daughters:
Selina Wee Su Lin
Melina Wee Mei Lin

Son-in-law:
Chung Hee Sen

Siblings, in-laws, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.

Wake is held at 61 Bloxhome Drive, Singapore 559756.

Nightly prayers will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Saturday 12 January 2019 at 1.00pm
for Funeral Mass at Church of St Francis Xavier,
63 Chartwell Drive, Singapore 558757 at 1.30pm, thereafter
to Mandai Crematorium Hall 2 for cremation at 3.00pm.



SEAH TONG CHIA

Age: 82

passed away peacefully on 7 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Tan Chek Huang (deceased)

Sons:
Seah Guan Hoe Andrew
Seah Guan Wee

Daughters-in-law:
Heng Peck Sze Winnie
Lee Yin Yin Joelle

Daughters:
Seah Chai Woon Jenny
Seah Chai Ju

Sons-in-law:
Lim Tow Tim
Sze Guan Kiat

Grandsons:
Seah Tzun Yew Jayden
Lim Shi Yih Anders
Sze Zhe Li Jeddy

Granddaughters:
Seah Soon Ee Charnayne
Seah Shan Ee Charlyne
Seah Sze Ee Charnyce
Seah Tze Huei Alycia
Lim Shi Ru Tammy
Lim Yu Shan Treicia
Sze Ruoh Teng Jolene
Sze Ruoh Qih Jerlene

Grandson-in-law:

Tan Wen Zhong

And all relatives & friends.

Wake is held at Blk 6C Boon Tiong Road
(Multi-Purpose Hall) Singapore 166006.
Cortege will leave on Friday, 11 January 2019
at 11am for Phor Kark See (Bright Hill
Temple) for cremation at 12 noon.



KOH AH BAH 高亚峇

Age: 81

passed away peacefully on 7 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wife : Heng Hwee Long

Sons :
Koh Kie Liang, Johnny
Koh Yong Meng, Don
Koh Pak Keng

Daughters-in-law :
Lim Cheng Cheng, Alice
Ang Pui San, Evina

Goddaughters :
Angelia Tay
Heng Kwee Keng
Carol Chua

Grandsons :
Ethan Christopher Koh
Elijah Christian Koh

Granddaughters :
Koh Wee Mun, Vanessa
Elise Christabelle Koh

All Relatives and Friends.

Body is resting at
Blk 156B Rivervale Crescent S(542156) Multi-purpose Hall.
Cortege will leave on 11 January 2019 (Friday) at 1:05pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 2:05pm.

In Loving Memory Of Our APPA & AMMA



KUTTIANDI SUNDARESAN
Departed **27.01.1996**

SUNDARESAN MARIAMMAL
Departed **09.01.2013**

*Cherished & fondly remembered by
All Your Loved Ones*

Thalai Thevasam Prayers In Loving Memory of



Jaya Kumar s/o Thorasamy

Departed on 23 December 2017

Dearly missed and remembered by loved ones.

*The blessed memories we have
Of him we'll always cherish,
And count them tenderly each day
Lest for lack of love we perish.*

Thevasam Prayers will be held on Friday 11 January 2019
at Sri Manmatha Karuneshwara Temple,
226 Kallang Road (Kallang Gasworks),
Singapore 339096 at 7.30pm.

Please treat this as a personal invitation. (HP: 87152940)

*"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in
trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give
way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea."
Psalm 46:1-2*



10th Anniversary Jean Lee Quee Fung 9 January 2009

Those we love never truly
leave us, for there are things
that death cannot touch.

We love you dearly and you will always
remain in our hearts and minds
Your memories will always be cherished
Greg and Cheryl-Ann and loved ones

Velasamy Meenachi

Age: 68

Passed away peacefully on 8 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: M Rettinavelou (deceased)

Sons:
R Parameswaran (Raj)
R Kumar Rajan
R Anbarasan

Grandsons:
Hiren
Raanes
Lavenesh

Daughters-in-law:
Devagi
Usha
Sharm

Granddaughter:
Roshini

And all relatives and friends.

Amma is resting at Block 426D Yishun Avenue 11,
#03-96, Singapore 764426.

Cortege leaves on Wednesday 9 January 2019 at 5.00pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 6.30pm.

Tel: 8288 8174 / 9183 0454 / 8133 8019

Om Vadakkatheeswarar Thunai 5th Anniversary In Loving Memory Of



MUTHIA KALAMANI

Departed on 9 Jan 2014

Five years has passed yet it seems like only yesterday.

In our hearts your memory lingers.

There isn't a day that we don't think about you.

Your smile and gentle kindness in your voice

are always remembered in our heart.

Words cannot express how much we miss you.

Always remembered & missed by brothers,

family and loved ones.

Obituaries

*For enquiries,
call*

1800-289-9988
(weekdays 8.30am
to 6.30pm)

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6319-5192

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SPORT

I hope to see (more of) South-east Asia at the senior world championships and, eventually, a medallist... I don't think it's impossible.

NATHALIE LAMBERT, International Skating Union's short-track speed skating technical committee chairman C7

KLOPP UNFAZED BY EARLY FA CUP EXIT

Reds boss insists that resting regular starters in 2-1 defeat by Wolves is the right decision

LONDON • Another year, another early departure from the FA Cup for Liverpool. In four seasons under manager Jurgen Klopp, they have not got beyond the fourth round and, this time, they did not even reach that far.

The bigger picture this season, of course, is that they have bigger prizes to aim for.

It probably says much about the FA Cup's place in Klopp's list of priorities that he looked more perturbed by a hamstring injury to Dejan Lovren in the opening minutes against Wolverhampton Wander-

ers on Monday than by the 2-1 third-round defeat that followed.

The German believes the injury, in the midst of a hectic schedule, highlighted precisely why he chose to name a second-string side to face the Wolves.

"Hamstring, is what I heard – without any signs before," the Reds manager told reporters. "I asked everybody, no signs, nothing, just out of the blue, so that's the decision you have to make."

"I am not sure what you all would have said if immediately from the beginning, our centre-half situa-

tion was Fabinho and Ki-jana (Hoever); then probably a few very smart people would tell me that I don't respect the competition or whatever."

Klopp made nine changes to the side that lost for the first time in the Premier League this season to Manchester City last Thursday, with Lovren one of only two players to retain their place.

He gave rare starts to Simon Mignolet, Alberto Moreno, Divock Origi and Daniel Sturridge as well as senior debuts for Curtis Jones, a 17-year-old local lad, and Rafa Camacho, an 18-year-old Portuguese midfielder who found himself filling a hole at right-back.

Lovren's injury meant that they were soon joined by the Dutch de-

fender Hoever who, at 16 years and 354 days, became the third-youngest player in Liverpool's history and the youngest in the FA Cup.

Goals from Raul Jimenez and Ruben Neves either side of half-time sent Wolves into the fourth round, despite Origi's fine strike after the break briefly bringing Liverpool level.

Without forwards Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane, the Reds struggled to get any momentum going forward.

Wolves, though, have made a habit of upsetting the Premier League's established top six in their first season back in the top flight.

After beating Chelsea and Tottenham and holding City, Manchester United and Arsenal in the Premier

League, Liverpool can now be added to the list of scalps for Nuno Espirito Santo's side.

Klopp had a final roll of the dice by throwing on Salah and Firmino for the final 20 minutes, but even their firepower failed to spark a fightback and his selection will now be questioned as he is still to deliver a trophy in his four seasons in charge.

However, with Liverpool still in pole position to deliver a first league title in 29 years, the German remained defiant over his changes.

"We played a similar line-up and had three tough games in the last couple of weeks, so it was clear we had to change," Klopp added after a run of four Premier League games in 13 days over the festive period.

"The intensity of the last few games gave me the information it was not possible to start with these three (Salah, Firmino and Mane) up front."

Wolves will now face the winners of the replay between Shrewsbury Town and Stoke City in the fourth round, the highlight of which is a mouth-watering clash between Arsenal and Manchester United.

The Gunners, with 13 FA Cup wins, and United with 12, are the most successful clubs in the world's oldest knockout competition.

THE TIMES, LONDON, REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

2011

Liverpool have been knocked out of the FA Cup in the third round for the first time since 2011, when they lost 1-0 to Manchester United.

5

The Reds have been eliminated from five of their last seven FA Cup ties against fellow Premier League sides.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp consoling Swiss midfielder Xherdan Shaqiri following the Reds' 2-1 FA Cup third-round loss to Wolves on Monday. The German made nine changes to the side who lost for the first time in the Premier League this season to Manchester City last Thursday.

PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

FA CUP 4TH ROUND DRAW
Roman numerals denote division of non-Premier League teams
Swansea (II) v Gillingham (III)
AFC Wimbledon (III) v West Ham
Shrewsbury (III) or Stoke (II) v Wolves
Millwall (II) v Everton
Brighton v West Brom (II)
Bristol City (II) v Bolton (II)
Accrington (III) v Derby (II) or Southampton
Doncaster (III) v Oldham (IV)
Chelsea v Sheffield Wednesday (II) or Luton (III)
Newcastle or Blackburn (II) v Watford
Middlesbrough (II) v Newport (IV)
Manchester City v Burnley
Barnet (V) v Brentford (II)
Portsmouth (III) v QPR (II)
Arsenal v Manchester United
Crystal Palace v Tottenham
Ties to be played Jan 25-28



Tiny Burton try for miracle against mighty City

LONDON • Burton Albion will need a "miracle" to overcome the might of English Premier League champions Manchester City over two legs in the League Cup semi-finals, said manager Nigel Clough.

The son of legendary manager Brian Clough, who led Nottingham Forest to two European Cups triumphs in 1979 and 1980, is also no stranger to producing Cup upsets.

Clough was in his first spell in charge when Burton, then in English football's fifth tier, held a Manchester United side boasting Cristiano Ronaldo and Wayne Rooney 0-0 in the FA Cup in 2006.

Burton have since progressed to

the third tier and are lying ninth in League One, but Clough believes stopping Pep Guardiola's City, particularly when they travel to the Etihad today, is an even tougher task.

"I think this one over two legs," said Clough, when asked to compare which was the tougher challenge.

"When Rooney and Ronaldo came on after 59 minutes here for Manchester United, it's a similar sort of prospect with the likes of the quality that Manchester City have."

"But, away from home, it's a different thing. When they are on their own patch, as you saw against Liverpool (City won 2-1), they're as good

and as confident as anything."

Clough also masterminded Sheffield United's run to the last four of both the League and FA Cups when in League One in two seasons at Bramall Lane between 2013 and 2015.

However, in eliminating Championship sides Aston Villa, Forest and Middlesbrough and Premier League strugglers Burnley, Burton have not yet faced any team of City's calibre.

"We've not gone into any detail with them (the players) because that will frighten the life out of them," admitted Clough.

"They know. They watch Match

of the Day every week. They know exactly how good they are."

"To reach the League Cup semi-final, in some ways the job is done."

"But we still have an outside chance of achieving a miracle, and that's what we'll try for."

City, meanwhile, are still in the hunt for four competitions.

After closing the gap on Liverpool to four points at the top of the Premier League, they thrashed Rotherham 7-0 on Sunday in the third round of the FA Cup.

Guardiola's men will also face Schalke in the last 16 of the Champions League next month.

"We do what we have to do to be-

come a great, great club," said the Spaniard.

"The great clubs don't choose competitions, don't choose games, you have to do your job."

"I would like to have two months' holiday right now, definitely – this month is really tough, but it is what it is."

"We want to become a top club and you cannot deny any game, we cannot drop any competition. We are going to play the next game like a final."

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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DAVID VERSUS GOLIATH

We've not gone into any detail with them (the players) because that will frighten the life out of them. They know. They watch Match of the Day every week. They know exactly how good they are.

NIGEL CLOUGH, Burton Albion manager, on preparing his players for the two-legged semi-final against Manchester City.



Asian Cup 2019

QUEIROZ LIVID DESPITE ROUT

Portuguese slams chief critic and former Iran coach Ivankovic; Iraq outlast Vietnam 3-2

GET ON THE RIGHT SIDE

At the moment, 65 to 70 million people across Iran are praying for the national team, this intelligent man comes along to praise Iraq and its coach. Brilliant, genius!



CARLOS QUEIROZ, Iran coach, taking aim at former coach Branko Ivankovic who has talked up Iraq's coach Srecko Katanec

ABU DHABI • Iran coach Carlos Queiroz blasted his critics after his side crushed Yemen 5-0 on Monday to fire an ominous warning to their Asian Cup title rivals.

The former Real Madrid boss and Manchester United assistant manager praised his players for "suffocating" the Group D minnows in Abu Dhabi as they ruined the war-torn country's first Cup outing.

But Queiroz's mood turned sour when informed that former national coach Branko Ivankovic, now in charge of Iran's most popular club Persepolis and a feuding adversary, had been talking up Iraq's coach Srecko Katanec while goading him to beat their bitter rivals.

"Now we turn to home affairs," said the Portuguese, who has frequently clashed with Iranian football officials and media since taking the job in 2011.

"This is the gentleman who used to call Iranian football a circus," he added, putting the boot into the Croat Ivankovic.

"At the moment, 65 to 70 million people across Iran are praying for the national team, this intelligent man comes along to praise Iraq and its coach. Brilliant, genius!"

Iran, the joint favourites with South Korea, are looking to end a 43-year title drought since last winning Asian football's top prize.

They took just 12 minutes to go in front when Mehdi Taremi had a tap-in after goalkeeper Saoud Al-Sowadi spilled a shot. Captain Ashkan Dejagah doubled the lead on 23 minutes with a free kick that went in off the custodian after hitting the post and Taremi powered home a header moments later.

Sardar Azmoun tapped in a fourth seven minutes into the second half when the goalkeeper failed to punch clear, by which time Iran were playing some champagne football, pulling off flicks and back-heels.

When substitute Saman Ghoddos volleyed home the fifth from the edge of the box after 78 minutes, the Yemen players who had been chasing shadows all game looked physically shattered.

"Fortunately for us, the first goal came early and, when you score



Top: The Yemen defence is all at sea as Iran forward Sardar Azmoun scored the fourth goal in their 5-0 win at the Mohammed Bin Zayed stadium in Abu Dhabi on Monday.

Above: Iraq defender Ali Adnan celebrating his late free-kick goal which turned out to be the winner against Vietnam at Zayed Sports City stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

early, it gives you the confidence and tranquillity to control the game," added Queiroz, who has been linked with the Colombia job.

"We didn't give Yemen time to breathe."

For Yemen, with players kidnapped by extremists, others going off to fight in the mountains or struggling to make ends meet driving taxis or working in supermarkets, just qualifying for the Cup was an astonishing achievement.

"I told the players at half-time to keep their heads up," said Yemen's Slovakian coach Jan Kocian. "We lost 5-0 and we have to live with the result, but we have two more games and we can play better."

Yesterday, 2007 champions and 2015 semi-finalists Iraq came from

behind twice to beat Asean champions Vietnam 3-2 with a 90th-minute winner from Ali Adnan, having trailed 2-1 at the break.

In Group B, Tom Rogic is a doubt for champions Australia's game against Palestine on Friday after breaking a bone in his hand during the shock 1-0 defeat by Jordan in their opener last Sunday.

But the country's football federation has yet to confirm the extent of the injury after he saw a specialist on Monday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

ASIAN CUP
Japan v Turkmenistan: Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 6.50pm
Uzbekistan v Oman: 9.20pm
Qatar v Lebanon: 11.50pm

SportsWorld

Egypt to host 2019 Africa Cup of Nations

DAKAR • Egypt will host the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations football Finals, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) confirmed after a meeting of its executive committee in Dakar, Senegal yesterday.

It will stage the expanded 24-team event in June and July after initial host Cameroon was stripped of the tournament last month over concerns at the slow pace of preparations.

The North African nation will host the competition for the fourth time, and the first since 2006. REUTERS

Lakers and Nets to tour China in October

NEW YORK • The LeBron James-led Los Angeles Lakers are set to play pre-season games in China in October, facing the Brooklyn Nets in Shanghai (Oct 10) and Shenzhen (Oct 12), the National Basketball Association announced on Monday.

The 13th edition of NBA China Games will mark the 27th and 28th league contests in the nation since 2004. It will be the second appearance in China for the Lakers, who played pre-season games in Beijing and Shanghai in 2013. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

India's cricket heroes rewarded for feat

NEW DELHI • India yesterday awarded cash bonuses of up to US\$85,000 (\$115,519) for captain Virat Kohli and his players who secured a historic first Test series triumph in Australia.

India clinched the four-match series 2-1 in Sydney on Monday. The Board of Control for Cricket in India announced a bonus of US\$21,400 per match for each player while the reserves will get US\$10,700 per match. That means those who took part in all four Tests will get more than US\$85,000, doubling their match fees. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Harrington is Europe's Ryder Cup captain

LONDON • Padraig Harrington has been handed the task of defending Europe's Ryder Cup title in the United States next year after being named team captain yesterday.

The three-time Major winner succeeds Dane Thomas Bjorn and becomes just the second golfer from the Republic of Ireland to take the reins after Paul McGinley, who was victorious in 2014.

Harrington was selected by a five-man panel, which included McGinley and Bjorn. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Nadal fine on court days after pullout

SYDNEY • Injury-plagued world No. 2 Rafael Nadal insists he is healthy and in no pain after coming through an exhibition match in Sydney, just days after pulling out of the Brisbane International.

The Spaniard teamed up with Canadian Milos Raonic to defeat Australians Nick Kyrgios and John Millman 4-1, 1-4, 5-4 in the Fast4 Showdown on Monday evening, a shortened, quicker format of the game often described as the tennis equivalent of Twenty20 cricket.

Nadal said that he was "feeling better" after withdrawing from Brisbane, when an MRI scan revealed a slight strain of his left thigh, casting doubts over his fitness for next week's Australian Open.

"I did not feel the pain here," the 17-time Grand Slam champion said. "It was a good start for me, a good comeback to the action in front of a fantastic crowd in Sydney."

"I really enjoyed playing here. I'm happy to be back on court and happy that I'm healthy again."



Rafael Nadal of Spain hitting with a young player from his academy in Brisbane last Saturday before his withdrawal. But he did not feel pain during a Sydney exhibition match yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

He has not played a main tour event since a knee problem forced him to retire during his US Open semi-final against Juan Martin del Potro in September.

The 32-year-old had surgery on his ankle in November to remove a loose intra-articular body and resumed training only a month ago.

He played the opening round at

an exhibition event in Abu Dhabi to start his season, where he lost to South African Kevin Anderson, and had a first-round bye in Brisbane before withdrawing.

Asked if he considered himself a genuine title contender in Melbourne despite his injury problems, he replied: "Why not? You can't predict that. Of course it

would be better if I had the chance to play a full tournament in Abu Dhabi and a full tournament in Brisbane, but the big importance is I am feeling good with the ball."

He will now head to Melbourne, where he was the champion in 2009, to get in as much practice as possible before the opening Grand Slam of the year begins on Monday.

At the Sydney International, world No. 5 Sloane Stephens battled back from the brink of a shock loss to a qualifier yesterday to join two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova in the second round.

The American was twice two points away from losing to 22nd-ranked Russian Ekaterina Alexandrova, but somehow rallied to win 0-6, 7-6 (7-3), 7-6 (7-3).

Earlier, Kvitova avenged her US Open loss to in-form Aryna Sabalenka by beating the Belarusian 6-1, 7-5. But there was no such joy for 2017 French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko, who lost 6-3, 6-3 to Australia's Ashleigh Barty. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018

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The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year award, organised in partnership with UBS for the fourth year running, seeks to honour the positive impact made by Singaporeans and celebrate the triumph of the human spirit

Harbhajan Singh

The veteran nurse led a team of more than 100 nurses in the 2003 fight against Sars, the severe acute respiratory syndrome. Today, at the age of 78, Harbhajan Singh continues to work at the very hospital he first joined as a young man aged 25.

FINALIST

Read about the other finalists at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the Singaporean of the Year 2018 by Jan 15, 6pm

Cast your vote now at str.sg/soty18vote

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ROCKETS FIRE ON MULTIPLE FRONTS

Harden scores 32 and gets teammates going with 14 assists as Houston beat Denver 125-113

HOUSTON (Texas) • The Denver Nuggets had a plan to stop James Harden on Monday night as they aimed to maintain their stranglehold on the National Basketball Association's Western Conference. The idea was to double-team the Houston Rockets point guard, who was on a 10-game streak with at least 35 points before the game at the Toyota Centre. What the Nuggets failed to realise was that Harden is as good a provider as he is a scorer, and the 29-year-old produced a double-double to help the Rockets extend their home-court winning run to 10 games with a 125-113 victory. Harden paired 32 points with 14 assists. Houston also received a career-high 31 points from centre Clint Capela (plus nine rebounds) and 21 points apiece from P.J. Tucker and Gerald Green. "They for sure trapped me, for sure had two on the ball every possession," Harden said on ESPN after the game. "It feels like every single game, I see a double-team or two on the ball mostly every possession. So I've got to figure out ways to impact the game, figure out ways to not only score, but get guys involved. "He (Capela) did what he was supposed to do. He finished. He played extremely well. Played hard." Harden's ability to score points and also provide assists for his supporting cast pleased his coach. "He still had a boatload of points, and they double-teamed him on every play, which is unbelievable,"

Mike D'Antoni said. "Whatever they throw at him, he'll find the best play. He'll find a way to score. He'll find his way, but he'll also get everyone involved." Tucker set a career high with seven three-pointers to help Houston (23-16) win for the 12th time in 14 games. The Rockets also bounced back after having their six-game win streak halted by the Portland Trail Blazers on Saturday. Green was equally impressive from beyond the arc as he made six three-pointers on a night the Rockets made 22 treys. "Give them credit," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said on ESPN. "You know Harden is going to get his but, when P.J. Tucker and Gerald Green score the amount of threes that they made, I believe 13 combined, that's a tough one to overcome. "Harden's also playing at a whole other level right now. MVP, all that. It's really kind of historic what he's doing." The Nuggets (26-12) had a five-game winning streak snapped and lost to the Rockets for the second time this season. Nikola Jokic paced Denver with 24 points and 13 rebounds while Monte Morris (21 points) and Malik Beasley (14) provided support off the bench. Jamal Murray added 13 points and fellow guard Gary Harris 14 in his first start since returning from a prolonged injury absence. REUTERS



The Houston Rockets' James Harden has been in irresistible form lately to the delight of the home crowd, who saw him deliver a 32-point, 14-assist masterclass against the Western Conference leaders Denver Nuggets on Monday.

Rockets centre Clint Capela shooting over Nuggets counterpart Nikola Jokic on his way to a career-high 31 points as he ably supported Harden in the 125-113 victory. PHOTOS: REUTERS

10 Games this season in which James Harden has tallied at least 30 points and 10 assists.

Minnesota star Rose sorry for insensitive remark

NEW YORK • Derrick Rose, the 2011 National Basketball Association Most Valuable Player (MVP) apologised on Monday for telling doubters who thought he would not keep playing well for Minnesota to "kill yourself". The 30-year-old, who became the youngest MVP at 22 while at the

Chicago Bulls, was answering a question about how he would fare in the wake of the Timberwolves firing coach and president Tom Thibodeau on Sunday. "I have a lot of confidence in myself," said the injury-plagued Rose. "Thibs was just the coach that believed in me. I mean, he jump-

started my career again and, for that, I'll always be thankful. "He believed in me, I believed in myself, my family believed in me... But everybody that thinks that it's going to stop, kill yourself. "It's just not." He later tweeted an apology, insisting he did not truly suggest suicide or having people harm themselves. He said: "I messed up by using the slang term 'kill yourself' today in response to a question about whether I can continue to perform without coach Thibs. "I did not mean it literally and regret using it so I apologise." His comments were especially

controversial in a league that has seen players like the Cleveland Cavaliers' Kevin Love and DeMar DeRozan of the San Antonio Spurs speak out publicly on the importance of mental health. The NBA and the players association even have a mental health and wellness programme for players, as reported by the Bleacher Report website. Rose, who played under Thibodeau at Chicago as well as Minnesota, was a three-time All-Star with the Bulls but multiple knee surgeries stalled his career before a return to form this season. He has looked more like his former self, averaging 18.9 points and 4.8 assists a game while connecting on a career-high 46.2 per cent of his three-point shots. The Timberwolves are 11th in the Western Conference with a 19-21 record, two games behind the Los Angeles Lakers for the final Western Conference play-off berth. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

SPORTS FIXTURES HIGHLIGHTS

Event	Home	Away	Timing	Venue
Wed, 9 Jan 2019				
A League	Adelaide	Melbourne Vict	4.50pm	LW
Asian Cup	Japan	Turkmenistan	7.00pm	LW
A League	Perth Glory	Sydney FC	7.00pm	LW
Asian Cup	Uzbekistan	Oman	9.30pm	LW*
Thu, 10 Jan 2019				
Asian Cup	Qatar	Lebanon	12.00am	LW*
French League Cup	Monaco	Rennes	1.45am	LW*
English League Cup	Manchester City	Burton Albion	3.45am	LW*
French League Cup	Paris SG	Guingamp	4.05am	LW*

LW* : Telecast not available at Livewire(Singapore Pools)
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Call for hard line on Russia as Wada returns for data

Sazali Abdul Aziz is joined by Rohit Brijnath and David Lee in a chat about Indian cricket's historic feat in Australia and Ikhsan Fandi's Norwegian trial: <http://str.sg/o69G>

MONTREAL • A three-person World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) team will arrive in Moscow today to obtain laboratory doping test data after the Russian authorities missed a deadline to provide the information. The mission announced on Monday comes after Wada's athletes committee last week demanded that Russia suffers new sanctions for missing a Dec 31 deadline to provide data from its drug-tainted Moscow lab. Wada will consider its next step in the long-running saga at a Jan 14-15 meeting of its compliance committee, but the athletes want Russia to be found in non-compliance. "Anything less will be considered a failure by Wada to act on behalf of clean athletes," a statement from the committee said. After a recommendation from the meeting, Wada's executive committee will meet by conference call "in the following days" to decide Russia's athletic fate, according to a Wada statement. Should it be found non-compliant and the Russians want to dispute the ruling, the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (Rusada) would have 21 days to notify Wada and the matter would go before the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Wada says analysis of data from the Moscow lab is crucial to building strong cases against dope cheats and potentially exonerating other athletes suspected of being part of a systemic state-sponsored doping operation in Russia. "We are continuing to act on the basis of the Dec 31 deadline having been missed, with all the consequences that failure could bring," Wada president Craig Reedie said. "This week's mission to Moscow is not only about us following due process and precedent. If the mission is successful in acquiring the data, it will break a long impasse and will potentially lead to many cases being actioned." In September, Wada conditionally lifted a ban on Rusada, paving the way for Russian athletes to return to competition across all sports. But one of the conditions was data access by the end of 2018. A five-person Wada team went to Russia from Dec 17 to 21 but left empty-handed after the authorities raised issues with the certification of Wada equipment under Russian law. AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE

Call for hard line on Russia as Wada returns for data

Sazali Abdul Aziz is joined by Rohit Brijnath and David Lee in a chat about Indian cricket's historic feat in Australia and Ikhsan Fandi's Norwegian trial: <http://str.sg/o69G>

SPORT

ASEAN WARMS UP TO ICE SKATING

World skating body says Singapore has key role to play in sport's regional development

Nicole Chia

Singapore may not have winter or snow but still produced its first Winter Olympian, Cheyenne Goh, in Pyeongchang, South Korea, last year.

The International Skating Union (ISU) is now looking to the Republic to help break new ground in the development of ice skating for South-east Asia.

Jildou Gemser, a member of the ISU's development commission, told The Straits Times that South-east Asia is one of the world governing body's "target areas" with possibilities of growing the sport.

While each country is responsible for its own development, she said: "What I have seen is that Singapore, in particular, has taken (a bigger) role in developing themselves and the sport, and we also expect Singapore to take the lead a little bit in this development of the region."

She was speaking to ST after last weekend's SEA Open Short Track Trophy, one of nine competitions

in the ISU's inaugural Short Track Junior Challenge global series and the only Asian stop. The series was introduced this season to provide young skaters with more international competition experience.

Ice skating has made inroads in the tropical climate of South-east Asia in recent years.

In 2013, Singapore hosted South-east Asia's first ISU-sanctioned short-track competition, the ISU World Development Trophy, and had only eight national skaters.

Now, the Singapore Ice Skating Association (Sisa) has 15 skaters in the national and national development teams, with 10 more in the learn-to-skate programme.

Regionally, winter sports will feature for a second straight SEA Games, after the 2017 edition in Kuala Lumpur, in the Philippines from Nov 30 to Dec 11 this year.

The 2019 host had just one short-track speed skater in 2015 but the number has grown to 34, of which 15 are competitive.

Its learn-to-skate programme is modelled after Singapore's, said the

Philippine Skating Union's sports director Christopher Martin.

Last weekend's competition attracted 101 competitors, the highest number in four editions, after 2014, 2017 and 2018.

Sisa president Sonja Chong is keen to do more. She hopes to host another international competition here in the second half of the year, and organise a seminar to focus on competitor stewards, who are responsible for the coordination of all administrative matters and the setting up of the timing system.

She said: "The officiating role, the competitor steward, doesn't actually involve setting up the system... Our idea is to bring in someone who knows how to do both (plan the races and use the system), and then run a seminar to teach more people so that the region can start conducting its own competitions."

Martin added: "It's not always (about) competing, we also need to build the framework like (increasing the knowledge) of the officials to develop the sport."

The keys to growing the sport, ac-

cording to ISU's short-track speed skating technical committee chairman Nathalie Lambert, are having "pyramids" of talent, as well as cooperation between countries.

"Quite a few countries came here with more than just one or two skaters. When you start to see 10, 15 skaters (from one country) lining up for an opening ceremony, you know it's starting to grow and you have a bit more depth in your pyramid," said the Canadian, who won one gold medal at the 1992 Winter Olympics and two silvers at the next edition in 1994.

"About 10 to 15 years ago, (South-east Asia) had nobody who could enter World Cups or junior world championships because no skater in the region made the minimum standard time for basic ISU events."

"I hope to see (more of) South-east Asia at the senior world championships and, eventually, a medalist... I think it's 10 to 20 years in the making, but I don't think it's impossible."

nicole@sph.com.sg



Singapore's first Winter Olympian Cheyenne Goh (far left) leading the pack on the way to winning the women's 500m final at the SEA Open Short Track Trophy women's last Saturday. The Philippines' Kathryn Magno (No. 47) was second and compatriot Anna Lourdes Rigos Cruz (No. 46) was third. Last weekend's competition at The Rink@JCube attracted 101 competitors, the highest number in four editions. ST PHOTO: JASMINE CHOONG

Ferrari turn to Binotto as Arrivabene's dry era ends

MILAN • Ferrari appointed chief technical officer Mattia Binotto as their fourth Formula One principal in less than five years on Monday, with Maurizio Arrivabene paying the price for their continuing lack of titles in his four years in charge.

Arrivabene's contract has not been renewed following a particularly disappointing season. Despite having the quicker car for considerable periods, a series of errors by Sebastian Vettel were compounded by team mistakes that saw their challenge falter and Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton taking the title with two races remaining.

The upheaval, a little more than two months before the start of the season in Australia on March 17, had been flagged up by the La Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper before the official announcement.

Ferrari president John Elkann, who replaced the late Sergio Marchionne last year, sees Binotto, 49, as the right man to lead the Italian stable this year.

"After four years of untiring commitment and dedication, Maurizio Arrivabene is leaving the team," Ferrari said in a statement.

"The decision was taken together with the company's top

management after lengthy discussions... All technical areas will continue to report directly to Mattia."

Arrivabene, 61, a former marketing chief with tobacco giant and long-term sponsor Philip Morris, replaced Marco Mattiacci in 2014. During his stint, Ferrari failed to break Mercedes' stranglehold on the F1 title.

Swiss-born Binotto is understood to have been favoured by Marchionne and has extensive pedigree. He joined Ferrari as test race engineer in 1995 and has since been race engine engineer, race engineer and head of engines before being made chief technical officer in 2016, a role in which he has been credited with returning Ferrari to the front of the grid.

How well equipped he is to fight Ferrari's corner in delicate talks about F1's future post-2021, with the sport's owners Liberty Media keen to see a more level playing field, remains an open question.

Ferrari won six of the 21 races last season, but that was not enough to stop Mercedes winning both the drivers' and constructors' crowns for the fifth year in a row.

Vettel was responsible for some of their failings, but the team notably let him down operationally, failing to institute clear orders on some occasions and making the wrong tyre choice in qualifying in Japan, an error for which Arrivabene turned on his team.

The Italian outfit have won a record 16 constructors' titles, with their last coming in 2008, and are unique in having competed in every season since the first in 1950.

Finland's Kimi Raikkonen was their last champion in 2007 on his first debut season for the stable.

His second stint has come to an end with his move to Sauber and he will be replaced by 21-year-old Charles Leclerc of Monaco.

REUTERS, THE GUARDIAN



Former Ferrari team principal Maurizio Arrivabene (right) with technical director Mattia Binotto before the Abu Dhabi F1 Grand Prix at the Yas Marina circuit in November last year. Binotto has taken over as the team's fourth principal in less than five years. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Malaysia Dragons v Alab Pilipinas (StarHub Ch201, 8.30pm), HK Eastern v Spore Slingers (Ch202, 8pm).

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group F: Japan v Turkmenistan (6.50pm), Uzbekistan v Oman (9.20pm). Gp E: Qatar v Lebanon (11.50pm) - Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208.

English League Cup S-finals, 1st leg: Man City v Burton Albion (StarHub Ch202 & Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.40am).

TOMORROW

FOOTBALL

AFC Asian Cup Group A: Bahrain v Thailand (6.50pm), India v UAE (11.50pm). Gp B: Jordan v Syria (9.20pm) - Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208.

Live telecast times are subject to change. For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

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life

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Top 10 games of 2019

Defend the world from aliens or ward off
menacing zombies in some of the most
anticipated video games this year.

Vincent Chang and **Trevor Tan** pick
their favourites. **D2&4**

Online multi-player role-playing action shooter
Anthem will be released on Feb 22.

DESIGN: SALLY LAM PHOTO: ELECTRONICS ARTS



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10 games we want to play

Embark on a Disney-meets-Final Fantasy quest in Kingdom Hearts III and defend humans from aliens in superpowered exo-suits in Anthem. Here are [Vincent Chang](#) and [Trevor Tan](#)'s top game picks for 2019

Still trying to clear last year's backlog of excellent games, such as Red Dead Redemption 2 and Assassin's Creed Odyssey? We feel your pain, but it is time to look ahead to this year's crop, which seems just as awesome, with several long-awaited titles – such as Kingdom Hearts III and Anthem – finally making their bow. It was difficult to whittle down our list of highly anticipated games to 10. We picked only games that are almost certainly launching this year, ruling out promising but

unconfirmed titles such as The Last Of Us Part II and Ghost Of Tsushima, though both games may yet surprise us with a 2019 release. vinchang@sph.com.sg trevtan@sph.com.sg

1

KINGDOM HEARTS III
Platforms: PS4 and Xbox One
Release date: Jan 29

Kingdom Hearts III is probably the most anticipated video game title this year, given that its predecessor was launched more than a decade ago.

The biggest draw of this action role-playing game franchise is its mix of video game developer Square Enix's characters and Disney characters.

You play as Sora, the protagonist of the series' first two games, who will be joined by Donald Duck and Goofy as well as King Mickey (or Mickey Mouse) and Riku, Sora's friend.

They will need to work together to thwart franchise villain Master Xehanort's plan to bring about another war.

On their journey, they will visit various worlds and meet characters from Disney and Pixar franchises as well as Square Enix's Final Fantasy.



2



METRO EXODUS
Platforms: PS4, Xbox One and Windows
Release date: Feb 15

Metro, the claustrophobic survival horror first-person shooter series, is back with its third instalment.

Exodus takes place in alternate Russia in 2036, two years after the events of its predecessor, Metro: Last Light, in a world devastated by nuclear war 23 years ago.

You reprise the role of the series' protagonist Artyom as he starts a perilous journey from Moscow to the Far East for a new life. The in-game journey takes place over the course of a year, with four seasons.

Like in the first two instalments, resources are scarce and you have to battle mutated creatures and humans in a post-apocalyptic landscape to stay alive. You also have to scavenge for parts to craft weapons and ammunition for survival.

3



ANTHEM
Platforms: PS4, Xbox One and Windows
Release date: Feb 22

In this online multi-player role-playing action shooter, you assume the role of a Freelancer – a member of a group that protects humanity from alien races – in a foreign hostile planet.

You don an exo-suit called a Javelin which gives superhuman abilities, such as flying or diving

underwater, as well as the ability to use powerful weapons.


There are different classes of Javelins and these exo-suits can be customised and upgraded.

You will be battling enemies in a wide array of terrains, from lush, green jungles to dark alien-infested caves.

You can also create stories of your own while you play, but we are not sure how this works.

Guess we will have to wait till next month to find out.

4



DEVIL MAY CRY 5
Platforms: PS4, Xbox One and Windows
Release date: March 8

Get ready for more stylish and frenetic combat set to heavy metal and rock music because Dante is back in the latest instalment of action-adventure series Devil May Cry.

The fifth instalment is set years after the events in Devil May Cry 2. Players control three characters – Dante, Nero and V.

Gameplay is typical of the series – the goal is to defeat enemies with spectacular action moves, using improbable weapons without getting hit.

Developer Capcom has upped its game in the graphics department. Devil May Cry 5 uses a relatively new game engine that promises photorealistic graphics while maintaining a steady output of 60 frames per second.

5



SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE
Platforms: PS4, Xbox One and Windows
Release date: March 22

Acclaimed Japanese developer FromSoftware's latest game, Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice, moves away from the gameplay and Western fantasy trappings of its popular Dark Souls games.

The main game mechanic is in the title – protagonist Sekiro, described as "a one-armed wolf", can be resurrected once, after dying,

for a second chance to take down the opponent when it is least expected.

Set in an alternate 16th-century Japan, Sekiro eschews role-playing elements such as character classes. There is also no multi-player mode, which is a departure from FromSoftware's other games.

But like its other games, you cannot adjust the level of difficulty.

Director Hidetaka Miyazaki has also said Sekiro is probably even more challenging than his other games.

6



DAYS GONE
Platform: PS4
Release date: April 26


Are zombies passe? Sony's Bend Studio hopes not, as its much-delayed open-world zombie-apocalypse game is finally slated to be released in April.

Days Gone is set in the Pacific North-west and features diverse environments ranging from snow fields to pristine forests.

The game's protagonist, Deacon St John, is a bounty hunter fighting for survival against natural enemies such as mountain lions and wolves as well as inhuman Freakers – a fancy name for zombies.

Sony has reportedly decided not to add a multi-player mode to the game. The focus and development time spent on the single-player experience (it went into production in 2015) hopefully translate into success in the vein of recent PS4 exclusives such as Spider-Man and God Of War.

7



HARRY POTTER: WIZARDS UNITE
Platforms: Android and iOS
Release date: 2019

Pokemon Go creator Niantic is one of the developers for Harry Potter: Wizards Unite, which should give you a rough idea of what this mobile game will be like.

Not much is known about it, though we expect it to be an augmented reality game, like Pokemon Go, that will use your Android or iOS smartphone camera to blend

fantastic elements with real life.

A teaser trailer (above) released last month gave no clue to the gameplay, but it did mention the appearance of magical anomalies in the real world that require the help of players to tackle.

This will involve casting spells and encounters with legendary creatures and iconic characters from author J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter world.

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FROM D2

8

SKULL & BONES

Platforms: PS4, Xbox One and Windows
Release date: 2019

This game by Ubisoft Singapore involves tactical pirate-ship combat set in an open-world environment and is played from a third-person perspective.

We played a multi-player demo at the Electronics Entertainment Expo in 2017 and were very impressed. You take control of a pirate ship and team up with four other pirate ships to attack merchants and enemy ships to loot gold.

It requires an understanding of the timing of raising sails and catching the wind to manoeuvre the vessel during attacks. Gameplay is intuitive, with graphics looking fantastic and featuring realistic water effects.

Skull & Bones was supposed to be released in the last quarter of last year, but it was delayed and will debut sometime this year.



9

DOOM ETERNAL

Platforms: PS4, Xbox One, Switch and Windows
Release date: 2019

The sequel to 2016's successful Doom reboot, Doom Eternal is set sometime after the previous game. Earth is now the stage for the eternal battle between the forces of hell and the unnamed space marine you play.

But the story is secondary in a Doom game. This first-person shooter series is all about the glee and mayhem of blasting demons



with powerful weapons.

So far, it has been revealed that Doom Eternal will feature new weapons. There will also be twice as many types of demonic foes to

contend with. You will have new tools too, including a grappling hook, and new movement mechanics such as wall-climbing and dashing moves.

10

THE OUTER WORLDS

Platforms: PS4, Xbox One and Windows
Release date: 2019

The Outer Worlds is a new sci-fi action role-playing game (RPG) directed by Tim Cain and Leonard Boyarsky, creators of the critically acclaimed Fallout post-apocalyptic RPG series.

This single-player-only RPG looks like Fallout-meet-Mass Effect (a space sci-fi RPG), with a cyberpunk theme and retro-futuristic setting.



The game is set in a future where mega corporations are colonising and terraforming alien planets.

Your character is on a ship that transports humans to a newly formed colony planet at the edge of

the galaxy. But the ship gets lost and you are awakened from your cryo-sleep. Thus begins your journey to investigate these corporations, with your choices dictating the outcome of the story.

Phones

Good screen at modest price

Vincent Chang

Samsung is taking the fight to Chinese smartphone-makers such as Honor, Oppo and Xiaomi in the highly competitive mid-range segment. Its latest Galaxy A7, released late last year, is priced at a relatively modest \$428, or roughly half the price of the flagship Galaxy S9.

On paper, the A7 looks like a solid mid-tier smartphone embellished with a couple of premium features. Notably, it has a triple rear camera system, which is not found even on Samsung's flagship models.

It also has an OLED screen, which is uncommon in its price bracket. This screen is surprisingly comparable in peak brightness to the one on the Galaxy S9+. In fact, the S9+'s screen looks only a smidgen more vibrant than the A7's, when comparing the two side by side. Of course, the 1,440p screen of the S9+ has more pixels than the 1080p display on the A7.

Unlike most recent smartphones, the A7 does not have a screen notch. But the display is surrounded by fairly thick bezels, especially at the sides. Its resulting 74.4 per cent screen-to-body ratio is not as impressive as competing phones, many of which tout a ratio exceeding 80 per cent.

The phone's front and back are glass and rather slippery – a sign of a premium device. But its frame is plastic instead of aluminium.

To my surprise, Samsung went with a side-mounted fingerprint sensor instead of the usual rear or front version. This takes getting used to, but the sensor is reasonably fast at unlocking the phone.

Wireless charging and water resistance are predictably omitted. But it was disappointing to find that it uses a micro-USB port to charge, a process that takes about two hours.

Other minor features that I miss

include haptic feedback, which means there is no vibration when you type or press on-screen buttons. The A7 also lacks a notification LED, though the Always-On Display is a good alternative.

Its 3,300mAh battery is average for a modern smartphone, but is more than sufficient for a day's use. In our video-loopback test, it lasted 12 hours and 10 minutes at maximum brightness and volume.

Its other headline feature is the rear triple-camera system, which consists of a main 24-megapixel camera, an 8-megapixel wide-angle camera and a 5-megapixel depth-sensing camera.

In the day, photos taken with the main camera turned out sharp with good detail and colours looked slightly more vivid compared with the actual scene. I noticed a yellowish tinge in some photos, which can be fixed with an easy colour correction.

The wide-angle lens, though, is not as good. Photos were significantly less detailed and there was some visual distortion, such as lamp posts appearing curved, even after correction by the camera app.

The camera did not fare as well in low-light conditions. Although the app does a decent job of brightening dark scenes to create a usable photo, the results do not bear close scrutiny – photos look smeary when zoomed in.

Thanks to its depth-sensing lens, the A7 does a mostly decent job of taking photos with a blurred background look (bokeh effect). It is far from perfect though, with some artefacts, especially at the edges of the subject. You can adjust the amount of background blur in the app before taking the photo.

Samsung uses its own Exynos 7885 processor in the A7. It may have eight cores, but only two of them are geared for performance and run at 2.2GHz, while the other 1.6GHz cores are built for power efficiency. It is not as fast as Qualcomm's mid-range Snapdragon 660 chip in the Geekbench 4 benchmark, especially in the multi-core segment.

Apps seem to take a fraction longer to start up and switching between apps also seems slower.

Navigating Samsung's take on Android 8.0 is mostly smooth without any obvious lag.

● **Verdict:** A solid mid-tier phone from Samsung with a good screen and reasonable price tag.



The Samsung Galaxy A7 has an attractive OLED screen, which is uncommon in its price bracket.

SPECS	
PRICE:	\$428
PROCESSOR:	Samsung Exynos 7885 (dual-core 2.2GHz, hexa-core 1.6GHz)
DISPLAY:	6-inch, AMOLED, 2,220 x 1,080 pixels, 411 ppi pixel density
OPERATING SYSTEM:	Android 8.0
MEMORY:	128GB (microSD expandable to 512GB), 4GB RAM
REAR CAMERAS:	24-megapixel (f/1.7), 120-degree wide-angle 8-megapixel (f/2.4) and 5-megapixel (f/2.2)
FRONT CAMERA:	24MP (f/2.0)
BATTERY:	Non-removable 3,300mAh battery
RATING	
FEATURES:	4/5
DESIGN:	3/5
PERFORMANCE:	3/5
VALUE FOR MONEY:	4/5
BATTERY LIFE:	4/5
OVERALL:	4/5

Hardy phone with super battery life

Trevor Tan

The UniStrong UT10 is not your average consumer smartphone. It is a rugged smartphone that is targeted more for use in commercial entities such as a logistics company or for geographical surveying.

The dual-SIM phone looks much bigger than an average smartphone. It is around 20 per cent bigger than a Samsung Galaxy Note9, which has a 6.4-inch display, despite the UT10 having a smaller 6-inch full high-definition display.

The reason for its large size is the amount of protection it has. It is like having an in-built armour case. Its water-resistance rating of IP68 means it can be submerged in water to a depth of 1.5m for 30 minutes.

It has also been tested to withstand drops from a height of 1.5m and can function in conditions of up to 60 deg C.

To test its ruggedness, I dropped the UT10 several times on a concrete floor from a height of 1m. A couple of drops were with the screen facing down. It got some scratches, but none on the screen. And the smartphone remained in good working condition.

On the bottom front of the smartphone, you will find the power button, two customisable buttons and a Function button. The volume control buttons are on its right, while you will find a push-to-talk (PTT) button on the left.

This dedicated PTT button is probably the biggest selling point of the UT10. UniStrong Apac, formerly Navicom Technology, works with Internet Protocol PTT (IP-PTT) service provider ProPTT2 to offer PTT solutions to companies.

IP-PTT works via Wi-Fi or 3G/4G networks, thereby allowing businesses to create their own secure and intuitive communication network.

The ProPTT2 app is integrated with UT10's PTT button. When you press the PTT button, you can immediately talk to someone over a

communication channel. The two customisable buttons are – by default – used to switch channels.

The app also allows for video PTT and real-time video sharing, which might be useful for first responders attending to emergencies, whereby they can show doctors the injuries of patients and doctors can immediately advise on the possible actions to be taken.

This IP-PTT requires a subscription fee of \$9 a month. However, UniStrong Apac is having a promotion till March where it is selling the UT10 at \$990 (usual price \$1,599) with 12 months of free PTT subscription.

UniStrong also offers plenty of accessories, such as a vehicle dock and hand-strap, to go with the UT10. One useful accessory is the barcode scanner (\$229) that comes with a hand-strap. This barcode scanner connects to the UT10's rear and users can press the Function button to scan the barcodes of products.

The UT10 is loaded with the stock Android 8.0 mobile operating system. It does not come with skins or modifications that usually slow down a smartphone.

However, the UT10 is not exactly fast. In the Geekbench 4 benchmark tests, it scores 940 (single-core) and 4,631 (multi-core). Comparatively, the Note9 has scores of 3,760 points (single-core) and 9,094 points (multi-core). Guess companies would not want their employees playing Pokemon Go on this smartphone.

With a 8,000mAh battery, the UT10 lasts a stunning 20 hours and 11 minutes in our videoloopback test. With normal use, it lasts three days before it needs to be charged. Great for those working outdoors, doing deliveries or medical response teams – the last thing they need is a flat battery.

● **Verdict:** For commercial entities or organisations that require IP-PTT communication network, the UniStrong UT10 is a strong proposition.



With normal use, the UniStrong UT10 battery lasts three days before it needs to be charged.

SPECS	
PRICE:	\$1,599 (without PTT contract)
PROCESSOR:	Qualcomm Snapdragon 626 octa-core 2.2GHz
DISPLAY:	6-inch, 1,920 x 1,080 pixels
OPERATING SYSTEM:	Android 8.0
MEMORY:	32GB internal storage (microSD card expandable to 256GB), 4GB RAM
REAR CAMERA:	13-megapixel
FRONT CAMERA:	5-megapixel
BATTERY:	Removable 8,000mAh
WEIGHT:	360g
RATING	
FEATURES:	4/5
DESIGN:	3/5
PERFORMANCE:	4/5
BATTERY LIFE:	5/5
VALUE FOR MONEY:	3/5
OVERALL:	4/5

Wearables

Comfy with good support



SPECS
PRICE: \$289
MATERIAL: Asics's Gel midsole with fabric upper
HEEL DROP: 7mm
WEIGHT: 410g (US 9, Men's)
RATING
DESIGN: 5/5
PERFORMANCE: 4/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 4/5
OVERALL: 4/5

The Asics Gel-Quantum Infinity provides plenty of cushioning

Trevor Tan

The Gel-Quantum Infinity is the first pair of Asics shoes to feature the company's famed Gel cushioning system from heel to toe.

First appearing in 1986, the Gel is usually found in the rear- and fore-foot areas of midsoles in Asics shoes.

With its full-length Gel midsole, the Infinity is said to offer more uniform impact cushioning as well as a smooth, consistent and durable ride. There is almost no outsole, apart from a few sole grips on the midsole.

The midsole of the review pair has a translucent orange shade, with different colour gradients run-

ning from heel to toe. This forms a striking contrast with the nearly all-black "no-sew" fabric upper.

Add the orange Asics logo on the upper's sides and the Infinity wording - in Japanese Katakana - embossed in gold on the tongue and heel, and the Infinity looks simple but gorgeous.

They feel great to wear too, fitting my feet snugly while providing room for my toes to wiggle. No breaking-in needed.

During my first 5km jog without

socks, the Infinity felt incredibly comfortable with plenty of cushioning to protect my knees, while the heel counter provided great support to my injury-prone ankles.

My feet did feel a little warm towards the end of the run, but it was not a significant issue.

However, these shoes do not provide significant energy response, especially compared with the likes of the Adidas Ultra Boost and the Nike Zoom Pegasus Turbo.

They are also quite heavy -

around 100g heavier than many running shoes of the same genre in the same size. That said, I have no problems walking around in them the whole day.

• **Verdict:** The Asics Gel-Quantum Infinity is a great-looking pair of running sneakers that provides ample cushioning during workouts and leisure walks.

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Gaming

Well-built PS4 controller needs better connection

Vincent Chang

The Razer Raiju Ultimate controller for the Sony PlayStation 4 (PS4) improves on its predecessor, the Razer Raiju, in various ways. But its key new feature is wireless Bluetooth connectivity.

Unfortunately, it is this feature that lets me down. At a crucial moment while I was laying down tetriminos in Tetris Effect, the Ultimate was disconnected from my PlayStation 4 console, which made me lose my game.

Now, this may sound somewhat shocking because being disconnected from a paired Bluetooth accessory like headphones is not uncommon, but I have never had that happen with the standard PS4 DualShock 4 controller.

For a premium game controller targeted at hardcore gamers, it is almost an unforgivable flaw, even if it only happened once in my testing.

In addition, I felt that the controller is a fraction slow to respond to my input, leading to more mistakes than usual. Thankfully, you can fall back on a wired USB connection with the included 3m long braided cable.

Like the original Raiju that was reviewed last year, the Ultimate is closer in size to the Xbox One controller and offers gamers a more meaty feel compared with the DualShock 4.

However, the layout of the joysticks and the buttons follows Sony's lead, with its two thumbsticks at the same level. The Xbox One controller has the left thumbstick positioned higher than the right one.

Personally, I found the Ultimate to be too hefty and uncomfortable to hold for an extended gaming session. Those with larger hands, though, may find its size and shape a better fit than the smaller DualShock 4.

However, there is no denying its build quality. It has textured grips and a soft-touch body that feels premium. The controller buttons feel clicky and tactile, almost like the keys on a mechanical keyboard.

Two extra thumbstick tops and a tilting directional pad (for fighting games) are found in the box. Switching to these spares is easy as they are attached to the controller via magnets.

Razer is not one to turn down an opportunity to add LED lights to its gaming gear, so naturally, the Ultimate has Razer's distinctive

Chroma LEDs around its touchpad. They look pretty, though you cannot synchronise its lighting effects with other Razer Chroma products.

These LEDs can be configured using the Razer Raiju mobile app (for Android and iOS). This app is also used to map game controls for the Ultimate's four extra buttons, two shoulder buttons at the top and two rear buttons.

The extra two shoulder buttons are useful, but the rear ones are prone to accidental key presses, so I disabled them in the app.

The app also lets you create custom profiles (four can be stored in

the controller) with different vibration strength, Chroma LED settings and thumbstick sensitivity. A minor grouse: At times, the app seems to have difficulty connecting to the controller, which is annoying.

The Ultimate can also work with computers via USB or Bluetooth, though a driver is required when playing PC games outside of the Steam interface. You will also first need to toggle to the desired connection (PC, USB or PS4) using a switch at the back of the controller.

Ultimately, the biggest sticking point is its price. For the cost of one Raiju Ultimate (\$360), one could

purchase five DualShock 4 controllers with change to spare.

• **Verdict:** Excellent build quality and premium features are not enough to justify its high price and sometimes-wonky Bluetooth connectivity.



SPECS
PRICE: \$359.90
CONNECTIVITY: USB, Bluetooth
WEIGHT: 370g
RATING
FEATURES: 5/5
DESIGN: 4/5
PERFORMANCE: 3/5
VALUE FOR MONEY: 2/5
OVERALL: 3.5/5

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Water Consumption: 11.10 litres/kg
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Commentary

What next for Apple?

On the back of its revenue guidance cut, it can consider trimming iPhone prices or making acquisitions to boost income



Trevor Tan

In a surprise move last week, Apple slashed its quarterly revenue guidance to US\$84 billion (S\$114 billion) via a letter to investors from chief executive Tim Cook.

The company previously projected revenue of between US\$89 billion and US\$93 billion for its fiscal 2019 first quarter, which ended on Dec 29 last year.

Slowing sales in China and fewer iPhone upgrades are the main reasons for the lowered revenue guidance, Apple said.

Slowing iPhone sales have been expected, but the situation must be pretty dire for Mr Cook to issue such a "warning" to investors.

"While we anticipated some challenges in key emerging markets, we did not foresee the magnitude of the economic

deceleration, particularly in Greater China," he said in the letter.

Greater China, in Apple's definition, refers to mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. This region accounts for nearly 20 per cent of Apple's revenue.

To be fair, Apple is not the only victim of China's slowing economy. It is affecting many major companies, with jeweller Tiffany & Co, carmaker Daimler and coffee behemoth Starbucks all reporting weaker-than-expected sales in China.

Furthermore, Apple's poorer performance will have a ripple effect on its suppliers, which include not only Foxconn, Broadcom and TSMC, but also the likes of tech giants Samsung and LG, which supply displays for iPhones. It just does not bode well for everyone in tech.

Nonetheless, sagging sales are never good news. So what should Apple do next? Having followed Apple for nearly a decade as a tech journalist, here are my humble suggestions.

The first, obvious thing to do is to make iPhones less expensive. Having less profit is better than having inventory stacked up in warehouses.

A \$300 decrease (or an 18 per cent cut) in pricing for the iPhone XS 64GB, for instance, will put it on a par with the Huawei Mate 20 Pro.

But competing on price has never been Apple's way. So, how about increasing the trade-in value of old iPhones? In Singapore, Apple

works with mobile solutions company Brightstar to determine the value of your old iPhones. Depending on the models, you can get up to \$600 via bank transfer for the trade-in.

Mr Cook said, in the letter to investors, that one of the initiatives Apple will take to improve results is to make it simple to trade in an existing iPhone for a new one in its stores.

Perhaps making the trade-in value more enticing – on top of making the trade-in process simple – will prove more effective in boosting sales of new iPhones.

In addition, it is high time Apple improves its iPhone camera. When famed portrait photographer Annie Leibovitz switches from her iPhone to Google Pixel 3, you know the tech world has caught up with Apple in this aspect.

Make no mistake, the iPhone still has an excellent camera system for a smartphone. But the likes of Huawei, Samsung and Google have caught up so rapidly that I think Apple has been caught napping.

For instance, I was really impressed by Google Pixel 3's Night Sight computational photography feature that makes a night scene look really stunning and sharp and detailed.

With the camera a main factor for buying smartphones, Apple could do well to follow Google's lead in computational photography.

Apple has been trying to diversify its product line-up and services to reduce its reliance on the iPhone.

According to Mr Cook's letter,

Apple's services, which include iCloud, Apple Music and App Store, generated more than US\$10.8 billion in revenue during Apple's fiscal 2019 first quarter and that Apple is on track to achieve its goal of doubling the size of its service business from 2016 to 2020.

Also, Apple's wearables grew by almost 50 per cent year on year, with "Apple Watch and AirPods wildly popular among holiday shoppers".

So maybe a round Apple Watch and second-generation AirPods soon?

In 2017, I said Apple should acquire Netflix, which was the top-grossing app on Apple's App Store with US\$853 million earned last year, according to research firm Sensor Tower.

But with Netflix having a net worth of about US\$160 billion now, it is probably too expensive even for Apple.

Not to mention, Mr Robert A. Iger, Disney's CEO and chairman, sits on Apple's board of directors. And with Disney soon launching its own streaming service, Disney+, a Netflix acquisition looks impossible.

However, with Mr Iger's connection, maybe Apple can make Disney+ an Apple TV or iOS exclusive? This will no doubt irk Android users, but will certainly add plenty of revenue to Apple's coffers.

Or we can simply wait for Apple's next big thing.

trevtan@sph.com.sg

Apple

Apple Mac mini perfect for basic computing

Trevor Tan

The Apple Mac mini (2018) is probably the most-anticipated Mac computer, as its previous update was way back in 2014.

First launched in 2005, the Mac mini was marketed as a low-cost Mac machine for those switching from the Windows platform. It does not come with a mouse and keyboard, as the idea is to let Windows switchers use their current peripherals.

The Mac mini's basic design has gone relatively unchanged through four generations. The 2018 version



continues to have a squarish aluminium unibody, which measures 19.7 by 19.7cm and is a mere 3.6cm thick. Weighing just 1.3kg, it can be easily moved around the table.

The latest model comes in a space-grey finish. The 2014 model was silver. Personally, I prefer the new look.

At its rear are four Thunderbolt 3 ports, two USB 3.0 ports, an HDMI 2.0 port, an Ethernet port and a 3.5mm headphone jack. Gone are the SD card slot and Thunderbolt 2 ports that are found in the 2014 model.

Internally, there has been a redesign, with a bigger fan and larger air vents for better cooling.

The 2018 model uses conventional system memory slots, so users can upgrade the memory. With the 2014 model, system memory cannot be upgraded as they are permanently soldered to the motherboard. Apple advises users not to perform such upgrades on their own, but get qualified technicians to do so.

The review unit is the entry-level model, with 8GB of system memory and 128GB of solid-state drive (SSD) storage. Both specifications are pretty meagre by today's computing standard.

Not to mention, the new Mac mini comes only with the Intel UHD Graphics 630 integrated graphics processing unit, which is not exactly a powerhouse.

Nonetheless, performance is not too shabby. In the Geekbench 4 benchmark tests, the review unit scored 4,723 points (single-core) and 14,436 points (multi-core) – better than a latest MacBook Air with comparable specifications which scored 3,690 (single-core) and 7,831 (multi-core).

For daily computing tasks such as Web surfing, word processing, iPhone back-ups and occasional photo-editing work with apps such as Pixelmator, the Mac mini is more than adequate.

If you want to use the Mac mini for serious video editing or gaming, consider getting the BlackMagic eGPU (\$1,149) external graphic pro-

SPECS

PRICE: From \$1,179

PROCESSOR: From eighth-generation Intel Core i3 3.6GHz quad-core processor (up to Intel Core i7 3.2GHz six-core processor)

GRAPHICS: Intel UHD Graphics 630

SYSTEM MEMORY: From 8GB (up to 64GB)

STORAGE: From 128GB SSD (up to 2TB SSD)

PORTS: 4 x Thunderbolt 3, 1 x HDMI 2.0, 2 x USB 3.0, 1 x Ethernet

WEIGHT: 1.3kg

RATING

FEATURES: 4/5

DESIGN: 5/5

PERFORMANCE: 3/5

VALUE FOR MONEY: 3/5

OVERALL: 4/5

cessing unit that features a Radeon Pro 580 graphics card with 8GB of video memory.

The only real downer of the new Mac mini is its price-to-specs ratio. While the review entry-level model costs only \$1,179, a fully souped-up version with a better Intel Core i7 processor, 64GB of system memory and 2TB of SSD storage will set you back by a staggering \$5,819. Comparatively, you can get the top model of the 21.5-inch Retina iMac (with 1TB SSD) for \$4,008.

That said, if all you need is a Mac for basic daily computing, you can always customise the Mac mini with 16GB of system memory and 1TB of SSD storage at a more affordable \$2,739.

• **Verdict:** The Apple Mac mini (2018) may be a tad under-powered for its price. But if you do not have much table-top space or need a basic Mac, this model is still the best thing to get.

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New Products

Epson Moverio BT-35E

SMART GLASSES



\$1,358

Designed to connect easily to hardware via HDMI or USB-C connection, the Epson Moverio BT-35E smart glasses can be deployed in

industries such as healthcare and engineering.

They come with an Android-based controller unit and use a large array of built-in sensors – including a 5-megapixel camera, gyroscope, accelerometer, compass and ambient light sensor – to deliver 720p-resolution augmented-reality images.

Synology MR2200ac

WI-FI MESH ROUTER



\$199

The MR2200ac is Synology's first mesh router. Its tri-band Wi-Fi design is said to eliminate dead zones and deliver Wi-Fi connectivity to the farthest

corners of your house.

In addition, it is one of the first routers to support the newly announced Wi-Fi security standard, Wi-Fi Protected Access (WPA3). With new WPA3 features including WPA3-Personal, WPA3-Enterprise and Enhanced Open, the MR2200ac offers the latest defences against snooping and other cyberattack threats.

Dell Alienware m15

GAMING LAPTOP



From \$3,299

At 21mm thick, the Dell Alienware m15 is the brand's thinnest 15-inch gaming laptop. It is also

shoulder-friendly at 2.16kg and features an efficient dual fan design that pulls in air from the bottom to the vents at the rear and sides.

Armed with the eighth-generation Intel Core i7 processors, Nvidia GeForce GTX 1060 (or GTX 1070) graphics processing unit and up to 32GB of system memory, the Alienware m15 packs solid gameplay performance.

Turbo Incanto TA65-70SS

HOME APPLIANCE



\$279

The Turbo Incanto TA65-70SS is one of the first 70cm cooker hood

models on the market. It is ideal for the small kitchens of Singapore flats and for people who do only light cooking and do not need a large cooker hood.

The all-silver, three-speed TA65-70SS features a convenient control panel, a carbon filter and a washable metal grease filter.

Cooler Master MasterCase SL600M

PC CASING



\$299

Want your next self-assembled PC to be your room's centrepiece? Consider the Cooler Master MasterCase SL600M.

The top and front of the case are clad in premium anodised aluminium with a smooth sand-blasted finish for that professional look. Its front panel offers easy access to four USB ports, a USB-C port and two audio jacks.

Razer Hammerhead USB-C ANC

IN-EAR HEADPHONES



\$159.90

The Razer Hammerhead USB-C ANC touts active-noise cancellation without the bulk of larger headsets.

The in-ear headphones also pack a sonic punch by combining the bass from a dynamic driver and high-frequency details from a balanced armature driver for a full-range sound, while a built-in digital-to-analogue converter ensures clear sound output. It comes with an inline control and its Comply ear tips provide a secure fit.

Compiled by Trevor Tan

Asian Film Archive's theatre to open in April

The 135-seat Oldham Theatre at Fort Canning Rise will be able to screen formats ranging from 4k digital projection to traditional 35mm reels

Ong Sor Fern
Senior Culture Correspondent

Cinephiles can look forward to a new space when the Asian Film Archive's (AFA) new theatre opens at the revamped National Archives of Singapore building in April.

The venue will kick off with a slate of eight Asian horror films, including the classic *Orang Minyak* (1958), starring P. Ramlee, and its Hong Kong riff, *Oily Maniac* (1976).

Watch out also for Japanese novelist Ryu Murakami's directorial outing *Raffles Hotel* (1989), shot on location, and ritual-murder drama *Medium Rare* (1991), the first full-length English language film released in Singapore.

Tickets for the opening programme will be priced between \$8 and \$13. Sales will begin in March and details will be released on asianfilmarchive.org.

AFA executive director Karen Chan, 45, says ticket prices for events at the Oldham Theatre at Fort Canning Rise will be comparable with commercial cinema rates. "It may be a little more for rare films. But we will also have free events because we want to keep the screenings accessible," she says.

The 135-seat hall can screen a large variety of formats, from 4k digital projection to traditional 35mm reels.

Ms Chan says being able to show 35mm prints stays true to the archive's core purpose of preserving and sharing films. "We want to be able to show prints that may not be available in any other form."

The new space, smack in the heart of the civic district, will also offer the archive a chance to broaden its film and educational outreach programmes, including film-maker workshops, post-screening dialogues and lectures.

The archive, currently housed at the National Library building in Victoria Street, already runs about 50 programmes a year, often in conjunction with venue partners such as The Projector and the National Museum.

But Ms Chan says the new space will allow the archive's screenings "a sense of regularity".

"We are working on screenings for a number of nights a week, especially weekends, so it gives audiences a chance to anticipate that every week there will be



programmes at the space."

The archive will also be able to extend runs for films, so film buffs have more time to catch a rare film screening.

The hall is a dream come true for the AFA, which started life as a non-government organisation in 2005. The archive became a subsidiary of the National Library Board (NLB) in 2014.

Ms Chan says she hopes the new cinema and its programmes will also serve as a catalyst for visitors to explore the National Archives. "We want to encourage people to utilise the NAS as a resource."

Such outreach, she adds, has been a core tenet of the AFA since its founding. "We want to provide people with a sense of different kinds of film genres and show them what the archive does," she adds.

The film archive, which has a col-

lection of about 2,500 titles, has restored about 25 titles at the cost of between \$100,000 and \$200,000 each. The full treatment, including cleaning and digital transfers, is given only to films in dire need of rescue as celluloid deteriorates rapidly in tropical weather.

Another condition is the rights owners have to allow the AFA to screen the films after restoration. Among the restored titles are the Nanyang trilogy (1957), three Cantonese language films shot in Singapore and Malaysia, starring Hong Kong actors Patrick Tse Yin and Patsy Kar Ling, and produced by Singapore's Kong Ngee Company.

Some of the restored films are also available on DVD format for sale on the archive's website.

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Oldham Theatre (above, in an artist's impression) will kick off with eight Asian horror films, including Japanese novelist Ryu Murakami's directorial outing *Raffles Hotel* (1989, left), shot on location. PHOTOS: NATIONAL LIBRARY BOARD, SHOCHIKU CO LTD

Baroque showcase with never a dull moment

REVIEW/CONCERT

THE SEASONS OF LOVE
Red Dot Baroque
Chijmes Hall
Sunday

Chang Tou Liang

Red Dot Baroque, Singapore's first professional baroque ensemble, made its debut in August last year at the Esplanade Recital Studio.

That quiet but momentous event seemed like a soft launch in comparison with this concert at a capacity-filled Chijmes Hall. Here, it was unveiled as the ensemble-in-residence of Sing'Baroque, a newly formed academy founded by Frenchman Arnaud de Fontgalland to promote the pursuit and appreciation of baroque music in Singapore.

The 12-member ensemble led by home-grown violinist Alan Choo gave a 90-minute concert performed without intermission.

The usual suspects of Bach and Handel were given a wide berth. Instead the excellently curated programme of less familiar works chose to showcase myriad moods captured in the seasons within different lands of 17th- and 18th-

century Europe.

The evening opened with Belgian soprano Lilith Verhelst singing Henry Purcell's *Music For A While*, her pristine voice illuminating the nave in a procession from the back of the hall.

The ensemble accompanying her then proceeded into Part III of Heinrich Biber's *Mensa Sonora*, a suite of short dances. The music was intimate and lithe, lifted by feather-light textures, alternating between fast and slow movements.

Verhelst sang three more songs, in French (by Michel Lambert) and Italian (Barbara Strozzi and Girolamo Frescobaldi), expressing melancholy and sorrow typified by the baroque lament before finally exulting in an outburst of joy.

The instrumental music paired with the songs echoed these diverse moods, providing the much-needed contrasts for the concert. There was never a dull moment.

In the French segment, Francois Couperin's *La Francoise* (from *Les Nations*), which featured flute (Rachel Ho), viola da gamba (Mervyn Lee), theorbo (Christopher Johann Clarke on a long-necked lute) and harpsichord (Gerald Lim) alternated between the subdued and cheerful.

Then the stage was cleared for Tan Qin Ying's dainty dance steps

in Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Chaconne De Phaeton*, a series of short instrumental variations.

Ornamentation and the art of improvisation was a quintessential baroque art and opportunities were found in Giovanni Fontana's *Sonata Settima* for Choo on violin and Lim on harpsichord.

There were some decidedly modern and un-baroque flourishes in Lim's keyboard display, but the adventurous spirit of the baroque was certainly on target.

The only concession to familiarity was Vivaldi's *Summer* from *The Four Seasons*.

The sonnet (penned by Vivaldi himself) that inspired the concerto was read before the performance, which saw Choo in his element for its virtuosic solo part. His was an animated stage personality equalled by perfect intonation and the sheer ease and natural way of his bowing.

This drew the loudest and longest applause, which was repeated after Tarquinio Merula's *Ciaccona* segueing into Frescobaldi's *Se L'Aura Spira* (*If The Breeze Blows*), with Verhelst taking centre stage.

So joyous was the reception that the last song was encored to marvellous effect.

Sing'Baroque has got off to a most auspicious start.

Love in 200 words

This Valentine's Day, The Straits Times invites you to tell us a love story in miniature.

Send us a story about love – true, imagined, funny, sad, yours, anybody's – in 200 words, 200 being the magic number this Bicentennial year. We will publish the best entries on Feb 10.

- All entries must be 200 words or less.
- The Straits Times reserves the right to curate, edit and publish

the entries at its discretion.

- Entries should not contain profanity or graphic language.

Please send your entry to stlife@sph.com.sg by Jan 31 with "LOVE STORY" in the e-mail subject line, along with the following details:

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THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018

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The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year award, organised in partnership with UBS for the fourth year running, seeks to honour the positive impact made by Singaporeans and celebrate the triumph of the human spirit

FINALIST

Elizabeth Tan
Entrepreneur Elizabeth Tan grew her father's shoe shop into a global chain with 50 stores. She is also a humanitarian who set up Sight To Sky, a charity which organises annual mobile eye clinics in India, Pakistan and Nepal.

Read about the other finalists at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the Singaporean of the Year 2018 by Jan 15, 6pm

Cast your vote now at str.sg/soty18vote

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GoAheadQuoteMe



Art should be transgressive. It should push and be uncomfortable, and offer another perspective on things.



ACTOR BEN WHISHAW



I think novels are a very important aspect in sound-bite culture because, in a novel, there are grey areas and it takes a long time for a story to unfold.



ACTRESS EMILY MORTIMER on the importance of reading in today's screen-centric era



The reason is that I get preconceived ideas, which, in my experience, don't normally survive to the end.



COMPOSER DANNY ELFMAN on why he typically does not do much research before a project



Mr Guo Zhihua places replicas of terracotta warriors in the rooms (above and below) which he calls Pit One, Two and Three, after the pits at the Emperor Qinshihuang Mausoleum Site Museum where the actual statues are. PHOTOS: XINHUA

Feel like an emperor in Xi'an hotel

The Airbnb-style hotel opened by a former taxi driver has more than 200 terracotta warrior replicas



XI'AN • Try to picture life-sized terracotta sculptures by your side as you eat, sleep and use the bathroom.

A hotel in Xi'an offering this fully immersive experience has become popular with both Chinese and foreign guests. The three themed suites, ranging from 80 to 100 sq m each, are located in downtown Xi'an, home to the terracotta army. Discovered in 1974, the army is one of China's biggest tourist attractions, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. It was built by Emperor Qin Shi Huang of the Qin Dynasty (221-207 BC) who unified China for the first time in history. The Airbnb-style hotel is owned by Mr Guo Zhihua, a 53-year-old Xi'an resident. A taxi driver in the

1990s, he spent most of his life driving tourists to see the warriors in the Emperor Qinshihuang Mausoleum Site Museum. "Many of my colleagues parked their cars and chatted with one another. But I preferred to go to the pits with my passengers to tell them stories about the warriors, like a tour guide. Over the years, I have grown to like the warriors very much," he said. He placed more than 200 warrior replicas in the three hotel rooms,

drawn thousands of visitors from 30 countries and regions since the hotel opened in 2008 when Beijing hosted the Summer Olympics. "I was banking on the growing interest in Chinese history," he said. The hotel is fully booked until May. "One day, I received 400 reservations in two hours," he said. Xi'an is a popular tourist site. During the three-day New Year holiday, the city received 2.453 million tourists, up 17.16 per cent year on year. Tourists spent 983 million yuan (\$195 million), up 24.24 per cent. Despite the hotel's rising popularity, some people discount it as a cheesy replica and say it is horrifying to sleep in a tomb. One lodger complained in a viral video that he could not sleep the whole night with warriors staring him down. Mr Guo remains unfazed. "I'd like to offer more history-themed hotels with Han and Tang Dynasty decorations so overseas tourists can truly experience Chinese history and then back home, tourists can carry on the Chinese culture," he said. XINHUA

தமிழ்மூரசு

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‘Brex-lit’: Social tensions inspire British novelists

LONDON • With Britain's decision to leave the European Union exposing fault lines across society, fiction writers are responding with an increasing array of Brexit-infused work – from state-of-the-nation novels to futuristic satire. Brexit's influence has spread to books by established authors such as Ali Smith and Jonathan Coe as well as those of debut novelists, pushing writers to examine often overlooked parts of the country and social themes. The genre – dubbed “Brex-lit” by the Financial Times – spans dystopian visions based on the angst of Europhiles and more reflective novels probing the apparent divides. “I have noticed that in the last few years, more and more (submissions) tend to be either fairly dark dystopia or relatively young nostalgia,” Mr Daniel Hiscocks, founder of a small, independent publishing house, said. “I see this as reflective of where, increasingly, pub conversations tend to be headed too,” he added. Last year, he published Douglas Board's Time Of Lies, which is set in a 2020 Britain that has elected its own version of United States President Donald Trump.

Board, a former civil servant turned writer, said Brexit had compelled him to write “about ignorance and contempt between ruling class and ruled”. “I think there's an opportunity for novels to really be playing on a completely different radio wavelength than the news media,” he said. Some of the authors said they wanted to use storytelling simply to highlight the divides laid bare by the 2016 referendum. Commissioned by European publisher Peirene to write something in response, Anthony Cartwright's short novel The Cut depicts an urbane documentary-maker's short-lived and ill-fated romance with a labourer. Set in a working-class corner of the West Midlands, the pair struggle to comprehend each other and their respective worlds. “We need to at least try to understand people on the other side of whatever divisions we face,” said Cartwright. “It's my concern that we are not doing that well enough. “What novels can do is observe a situation, offer some reflection of the national mood.” Other chroniclers of these tumultuous times felt compelled to write out of sheer anger.

James Silvester, whose Blood, White And Blue debut claims to be the first “post-Brexit” novel, said: “Brexit influenced me enormously and the book is very much a reaction against it.” Married to a Slovak national working in Britain's emergency services who has faced a spike in racist abuse since 2016, Silvester wanted to “encourage people to think about the reality of Brexit... what it's doing to people, the pain it has caused and continues to cause”. In the book, the main character is “a half-Czech spy fighting for a country that hates her in the chaos of Brexit”. Some of the books are set in parts of Britain often ignored in literature – like the Brexit heartland of eastern England in Adam Thorpe's Missing Fay and the West Midlands, where much of Coe's state-of-the-nation tome Middle England is set. Thorpe's novel centres on the disappearance of a teenager from a rundown housing project. His portrayal of life in a small Lincolnshire town was written mostly before the referendum. It only became a so-called “Brexit novel” because the “poverty and sense of hopelessness” depicted in it had helped explain the result, he said.

“Novelists who want to reflect their times have to have finely tuned antennae, picking up signals that the population in general ignore,” he said. He nonetheless remained cautious about letting too much politics into the story. “I wanted the novel to be a litmus test of a nation at a certain moment more than a political statement,” he said. Still, British novelists are starting to make a much-needed return to “forcing people to think and feel about stuff that's quite uncomfortable”, said author Amanda Craig. Her account of a marriage in crisis in The Lie Of The Land offers a more subtle take on the forces fuelling Brexit – with the pinch on family budgets and the urban-rural divide looming large in the background. “The reason fiction has lost a lot of its power in social terms is because too few of us are doing what people like (Charles) Dickens did,” Craig said. “I do think that we've lost that sense of moral purpose. Fiction is there to entertain and to move and to delight, but it's also there to make you think.” AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



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CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
9.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
11.40 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 5 (HD) (IE)
12.30 Secret Meat Business (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (V)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 3 (SC)
2.30 Arts 21 (HD) (Cul)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
3.45 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
4.00 Meet The MP (HD) (PG) (SC)
4.30 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 Divided (US) (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
7.30 America's Got Talent: The Champions (V) (Season Premiere)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 The Wish (CC) (IE)
10.00 Singapore Reimagined (HD) (CC) (IE)
11.00 Scorpion 2 (HD) (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Whacked Out Sports (PG) (V)
12.50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
1.40 This Is Us (HD) (PG13) (D)
2.30 Grimm 5 (HD) (PG13) (D)
3.20 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
3.50 Martha Bakes 5 (HD) (IE)
4.15 Secret Meat Business (IE)
4.40 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (PG) (V)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
5.50 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 Classic Golden Melody 2018 (V)
7.00 Frontline (CA)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (News)

8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Stay Healthy Stay Happy 2017 (IE)
10.30 Night Market Life Aka Life (PG) (D)
PM
12.30 Street Smart (V)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 New Doraemon (S)
2.30 Your Hand In Mine (HD) (CC) (D)
3.30 Love Thy Neighbour (PG) (CC) (D)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Taste Of Love (CC) (V) (Finale)
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Fruit, Veggies & Me 2 (HD) (CC) (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyong (PG) (D)
1.00 Celebrity Chef 2 (HD) (V)
2.00 Changing Fortunes (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Scrum! (PG) (CC) (D)
4.00 Greener Pastures (CC) (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Schools Unlimited (CC) (IE) (Debut)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D) (Debut)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Schools Unlimited (CC) (IE) (Debut)
AM
12.30 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Why It Matters 2
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Real Deal
2.00 News Now

4.02 Why It Matters 2
5.00 News Now
7.02 Real Deal (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Champions For Change (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Real Deal
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Power List Asia 6
1.02 Champions For Change
2.00 News Now
2.30 The Successors 5
3.02 Why It Matters 2
4.00 News Now
4.30 Millionaire Minds
5.02 Champions For Change
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Azhagiya Snehithi 2 (IE)
4.00 Sundaram Kudumbathinar (HD) (D)
4.30 Enna Nadakuthu 6 (HD) (V)
5.30 Motu Patlu 3 (S)
6.00 Ishq Ka Rang Safed (Hindi) (D)
7.00 Konjam Soru Konjam 2 (Cul)
7.30 Mella Thiranthathu Kathavu 2 (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Adukku Veetu Annasamy (HD) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Ethiroli 15 (HD) (CC) (CA)
9.30 Theerpugal 4 (CC) (IE)
10.00 Kannum Kannum Kollaiyadithal (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
10.30 Bayam (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 Nyabagam Varuthae 3 (V)
11.30 Tamil Seithi (Encore) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Doki (HD) (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
11.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
PM
12.00 Bugsville (P)

12.30 Teddies (HD) (IE)
1.00 Little Charmers (HD) (P)
1.30 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
2.00 Doki (HD) (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
3.30 Andy's Prehistoric Adventures (P)
4.00 All Over The Workplace (S)
4.30 Sherazade: The Untold Stories (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Grizzy & The Lemmings (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)
6.30 Totally Totto (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)
8.00 Star Wars Rebels (HD) (CC) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (HD) (CC) (S)
9.00 ITTF Women's World Cup 2018 (Sports)
11.00 American Ninja Warrior 6 (HD) (PG) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
3.00 Juxbox Ekspres
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Rintihan Hati (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Ejen Ali (HD) (S)
6.30 Top 5 Makan (CC) (IE)
7.00 Teratai Kemboja (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Detik (PG) (CA)
9.00 Manja 3 (CC) (IE)
9.30 Hilang Kasih Di Sarajevo (CC) (D) (Debut)
10.30 Alam Maya (PG) (CC) (D)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News) (R)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)

Devote your energy to helping as many people as you can. It will soothe your soul.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

You might learn something you wish you did not know, but it works to your advantage.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

You are concerned about how people see you, so make sure that you are at your best.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

You want to follow your own path, but make sure you are paying attention to the people around you too.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)

Clear communication is a rare commodity now and you are better off just letting your mind wander.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)

Everything is on the table, even things you thought were non-negotiable. Work that to your advantage.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)

Your schedule looks like a mess by the end of the day. Try not to freak out at the disruptions.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)

Indulge your artistic sensibilities – rearrange your life so it looks and feels better.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)

Do not worry about the competition overtaking you. In fact, it might be even slower than you.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)

You push yourself harder than anyone else. Expect to feel good about what you have accomplished.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)

Whoever needs you is in luck because you just cannot say no to helping out.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)

You are in the right place to rediscover yourself. Focus on others' needs tomorrow instead.

- Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.11am/7.13pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 9.31am/9.49pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 1.41am (2.8m), 6.52am (1.6m), 12.35pm (3m), 7.16pm (0.6m). Desaru: 1.24am (2.8m), 6.50am (1.8m), 11.52am (2.6m), 6.39pm (0.8m). Port Dickson: 2.40am (0.3m), 8.27am (2.5m), 3.10pm (0.5m), 8.59pm (2.4m). Mersing: 12.51am (3.3m), 7.07am (1.9m), 11.33am (2.4m), 6.05pm (1m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 2.11am (2.8m), 7.26am (1.5m), 1.09pm (3m), 7.50pm (0.6m). Desaru: 1.54am (2.8m), 7.24am (1.8m), 12.35pm (2.6m), 7.13pm (0.8m). Port Dickson: 3.12am (0.4m), 8.58am (2.5m), 3.35pm (0.5m), 9.25pm (2.4m). Mersing: 1.24am (3.2m), 7.40am (1.9m), 12.15pm (2.4m), 6.35pm (1.1m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
7.35 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.00 Storage Wars 10
8.30 Pawn Stars 19
9.30 The Pickers 11
10.25 Forged In Fire 3
11.20 Breaking Mysterious
PM
1.10 Ancient Aliens 11
3.00 Pawn Stars 18
3.30 Storage Wars: Texas 6
3.55 Storage Wars 10
4.25 Forged In Fire 3
5.20 Mountain Men 6
6.15 The Pickers 11
7.10 Pawn Stars 19
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 Ancient Aliens 11
10.50 Breaking Mysterious

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Scraps
10.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
11.00 Zoo 3
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 The Wrong House
3.35 Married At First Sight Australia 4
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
7.00 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
7.30 Married At First Sight Australia 4
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 House of Darkness: New Blood
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
8.20 Alvin And The Chipmunks: Chipwrecked/9.50 U.S. Marshals
PM
12.00 Darkest Hour
2.05 My Super Ex-Girlfriend (NC16)
3.40 Lego Scooby-Doo! Blowout Beach Bash/4.55 Eagle Eye
6.50 The Matrix
9.00 Molly's Game (NC16)
11.20 Final Destination 3 (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.10 Patriots Day (NC16)
10.20 Life Support
11.45 Catwoman
PM
1.30 The Firm/3.00 Dragnet
5.45 Batman And Harley Quinn
7.00 Superstar
8.25 Barb Wire
10.00 Inside Man

HUB CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
6.00 Destiny By Love (HD)

7.00 Tomorrow With You (HD)
8.15 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Viva La Romance (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)
1.30 Tomorrow With You (HD)
2.45 The King Vs The King 2 (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)/6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
8.00 Chinese Restaurant 2 (HD)
10.00 The King's Woman (HD)
11.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
9.00 Multi Sport: Fise World Series Highlights 2018: Chengdu
10.00 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Finals
PM
12.00 Tennis: Deuce 2018
12.30 Mountain Bike: Enduro World Series 2018: Montagnes Du Caroux France Highlights
1.00 UCI BMX Supercross World Cup Rounds 1 And 2 Highlights: France
2.00 Tennis: ATP 1000 Nitto ATP Finals 2018 Day 3 Session 1
4.00 Tennis: ATP 1000 Nitto ATP Finals 2018 Day 3 Session 2
6.30 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Finals
8.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Westports Malaysia Dragons Vs San Miguel Alab Philipinas
10.30 BMX Supercross 2017: Lane 1
11.00 UCI BMX Supercross World Cup Rounds 1 And 2 Highlights: France

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.00 National Basketball League Round 12 Brisbane Bullets Vs Melbourne United
9.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG) (Live)
11.00 The Football Review
11.30 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport. TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Formosa Dreamers Vs Singapore Slingers
2.30 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Manchester City Vs Burton Albion
4.30 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
5.00 National Basketball League Round 12 Adelaide 36ers Vs New Zealand Breakers
7.00 Magazine: Omnisport. TV
7.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Mono Vampire Vs CLS Knights Indonesia (Live)/9.30 Wrestling: WWE Raw (PG13)
AM
12.00 Wrestling: WWE This Week (PG)
12.30 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 1 Leg 1 Manchester City Vs Burton Albion
2.30 Magazine: Omnisport. TV
3.00 Football: The EFL Highlights 2018/19
3.30 The Football Review
3.45 Football: EFL Carabao Cup 2018 Semi-finals 2 Leg 1 Tottenham Hotspur Vs Chelsea (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzy And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 Craig Of The Creek
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Ben 10
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzy And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Valor
6.45 The Amazing Race 30
7.35 The Blacklist 5
8.25 MacGyver
9.15 American Ninja Warrior 7
10.05 Valor
10.55 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
11.45 The Amazing Race 30
PM
12.35 MacGyver
1.25 Quantico 2
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 7
3.05 Valor
3.55 The Blacklist 5
4.45 MacGyver
5.35 The Blacklist 6
7.15 The Amazing Race 30
8.05 NCIS: Los Angeles 8
9.45 Seal Team 2
10.35 Supernatural 14
11.25 Seal Team 2

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 iZombie 4
6.50 Person Of Interest 4
7.40 Lethal Weapon 2
8.30 Supergirl 2
9.15 The Flash 3
10.05 iZombie 4
10.50 Breaking The Magician's Code
11.40 Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows Part 2

Could Golden Globes triumph mar chances of Oscar win?

LOS ANGELES • Next stop: the Oscars. Could there be a backlash against, or comeback, for those who won or were snubbed at the Golden Globes?

This week, 7,902 members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences cast their votes for nominees, with the Oscars to be given out on Feb 24.

Sunday's Globes ceremony was filled with upsets, with favourite A Star Is Born picking up only one trophy for Best Song, while its stars, Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper, were shunned for acting and directing honours.

But little-heralded Bohemian Rhapsody lifted the major prizes, with Rami Malek winning Best Actor and the movie bagging Best Drama.

According to trade publication Hollywood Reporter, with the voting for Oscar nominees starting on the day after the Globes event, Sunday's results could sway how the Oscar decisions are made.

Could there be a swing against Bohemian Rhapsody, with its Globes triumph already drawing dissent from netizens? Fans of Lady Gaga have threatened to "riot" after she lost to Glenn Close for Best Actress.

But Close's win could boost the veteran's chances, with talk that the six-time Oscar nominee could finally get her just rewards for an illustrious career in Hollywood.

Close certainly made her time on the Globes stage count. When accepting her statuette, she reminded industry folk that she had been acting for 45 years and that her role in The Wife speaks to everyone who has lived in the shadow of other people.

Racial-issues film Green Book, which has been slammed by some as lightweight, won a Globe for Best Movie (Musical/Comedy), giving

director Peter Farrelly a platform on Sunday to shut down naysayers, and boost its Oscar chances.

"We all want the same things – we want love, we want happiness, we want to be treated equally. And that's not such a bad thing."

The New York Times noted that much of the awards season is about momentum and it never hurts to be seen winning.

Academy members weighing the crowded best-actress race, for example, will have Sunday's terrific speeches from Close and Olivia Colman at the top of their minds.

British actress Colman – who won for Best Actress in A Comedy Or Musical – drew laughter when she said: "Cor blimey, thank you so much." Moments like those can make all the difference.

Film critic Alissa Wilkinson told the Vox portal: "So, while they've probably watched the favourites by now, a Golden Globes win for an underdog might push a voter to give the film a look before submitting their ballot."

Green Book and Bohemian Rhapsody have found more favour with audiences than with critics, which is exactly the sort of skew the Oscars would prefer.

Last summer, the academy infamously flirted with introducing an award for Best Popular Film, an attempt to pull focus from the critically acclaimed but underseen movies that often comprise much of the Best Picture line-up.

If Green Book and Bohemian Rhapsody are nominated for the Oscars' top prize alongside A Star Is Born and Black Panther, the academy will be fielding its most populist slate in years.

At a time when the Oscar races often narrow, the Globes' unexpected choices have done their part to keep this season wide open.

Sam Elliott honoured



Lady Gaga (above right) and Bradley Cooper (left) did not let their Golden Globes disappointment mar the happiness of Sam Elliott (centre). They turned up on Monday to witness their 74-year-old A Star Is Born co-star imprint his hands and feet in cement in Hollywood Boulevard. Elliott plays Cooper's elder brother in the film, which picked up only one award, for Best Song, on Sunday. Lady Gaga, dressed in a striking sky-blue trenchcoat, received a kiss on her forehead from Elliott. The trio later shared a heart-warming embrace as Cooper hailed the "iconic mark" that Elliott had left on films. Elliott, who has two prime-time Emmy nominations, is a regular on current Netflix series, The Ranch. While he was not nominated at the Golden Globes, industry magazine Variety reported that the actor seems poised to land his first Oscar nomination for what it called his "tender performance" in A Star Is Born. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Actor Kevin Spacey caught speeding

LOS ANGELES • Maybe Kevin Spacey was in a hurry to avoid being followed by the paparazzi.

On Monday, he was pulled over by the police for speeding near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport near Washington, DC – on the way home from his sexual assault hearing.

According to People magazine, Spacey, 59, who was in the driver's seat, was not issued with a ticket, but received a warning instead.

Earlier in the day, Reuters reported that the actor had appeared before a Massachusetts judge over a case stemming from an alleged 2016 incident involving an 18-year-old busboy on Nantucket Island.

The latter had told police that Spacey had bought him several rounds of beer and whiskey and said: "Let's get drunk."

The busboy said he was groped as they stood next to a piano.

Spacey did not enter a plea at the hearing, but a not-guilty one was automatically put in on his behalf in accordance with Massachusetts law.

His lawyer said police reports showed that the busboy had exchanged numerous text messages and Snapchat videos with his then-girlfriend about his interactions with Spacey at the Club Car bar – but never mentioned the alleged assault.

Spacey, a two-time Oscar winner, could face up to five years in prison if convicted.



Actor Kevin Spacey at the Nantucket District Court in Massachusetts on Monday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Mattel to make BTS dolls

SEOUL • Barbie will have company. Its maker, Mattel, is turning to South Korean boyband BTS for help to lure a new generation of kids.

It will create a toy line inspired by the seven-member group that includes dolls, collectible figures and games, the California-based company announced at the Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair.

Mattel's stock fell 35 per cent last year after slumping 44 per cent in 2017.

One of two leading toymakers in the United States, it hired a new chief executive officer last year and is attempting to become a broader entertainment company that turns its best-selling toys into television shows and movies, reported Bloomberg.

Thanks to a loyal fan base known as #Army, BTS' economic value is estimated at more than US\$3.6 billion (\$\$4.9 billion), noted Hyundai Research Institute.

Last year, BTS became the first South Korean pop group to top the Billboard album charts in the US, and sold out a concert at New York City's Citi Field.

Carmaker Hyundai Motor, messaging app Line and sneaker brand Converse are working on new products with BTS, who last year sold 603,307 albums in the US, second only to Eminem's sales of 755,027 albums, according to Buzz Angle Music.

Actors' union demands profit sharing

NEW YORK • The stage is set for a walkout. The theatre actors' union said on Monday that it was barring members from taking part in developmental work on Broadway shows while it demands a new contract that includes profit sharing.

About a quarter of all Broadway shows use developmental labs to test material.

"No union wants to get to this point," said Ms Kate Shindle, president of Actors' Equity.

"Our members who do this work don't think the terms are fair."

The Broadway League, representing producers, said it was still hopeful that the dispute would be resolved.

At least four developmental labs had been scheduled to take place in the coming weeks, for stage adaptations of the films Almost Famous (2000) and August Rush (2007) and for jukebox musicals adapted from the catalogues of singers

Michael Jackson and Huey Lewis.

The Huey Lewis musical, called Heart Of Rock & Roll, held auditions on Monday for a lab scheduled to begin late next month.

Equity said the auditions took place as scheduled, but any of its members who receive offers would be barred from participating in the lab without a settlement.

Developmental labs generally last four weeks and involve performers and creators in a rehearsal room, working on dialogue, scenes, songs and dances.

Actors are paid about US\$1,000 (\$\$1,360) a week for taking part.

The union is seeking not only a salary increase, but also a new provision requiring the handful of shows that make it to Broadway and succeed in recouping their capitalisation costs to share 1 per cent of their profits with actors and stage managers who were part of the show's early development.

NYTIMES

Buzzing

21 Savage's I Am I Was is No. 1 again

Rapper 21 Savage has the No. 1 spot on Billboard's album chart for a second time with I Am I Was.

Rapper A Boogie Wit Da Hoodie holds at No. 2 with Hoodie SZN, while rapper Meek Mill's Championships is at No. 3.

Singer Eric Chou confirms relationship rumours

Taiwanese singer Eric Chou has confirmed rumours that he is in a relationship with Dacie Chao, a news anchor at Sanlih E-Television.

Chou, 23, disclosed during a media session on Monday that he has been dating Chao, 29, since March last year.

B| HOME



ALWYN KENG
UNDERGRAD DISABLED BY
ACCIDENT MAKES COMEBACK
AND GETS TOP HONOURS B7



654

Weight in kg of artefacts, natural remains found in 2010 evaluation and 2011 excavations near the Singapore River.

Above: Some of the teeth found scattered across the grounds of the Victoria Concert Hall during the dig by the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre's archaeology unit during the hall's redevelopment.

Right: An artist's impression of the Victoria Concert Hall site in the 14th century, depicting a busy market, a small cottage industry for copper or metal work, and houses. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF LIM CHEN SIAN

Teeth of inhabitants of early Singapore found in Civic District

Dating from 1300s-1600s, 45 were found in archaeological dig at Victoria Concert Hall

Melody Zaccheus
Heritage and Community Correspondent

Forty-five adult human teeth dating from the 1300s to 1600s were

found scattered across the grounds of the Victoria Concert Hall in the Civic District, a new report published last week has revealed.

They were uncovered during a 2011 dig by the archaeology unit of the Nalanda-Sriwijaya Centre at the

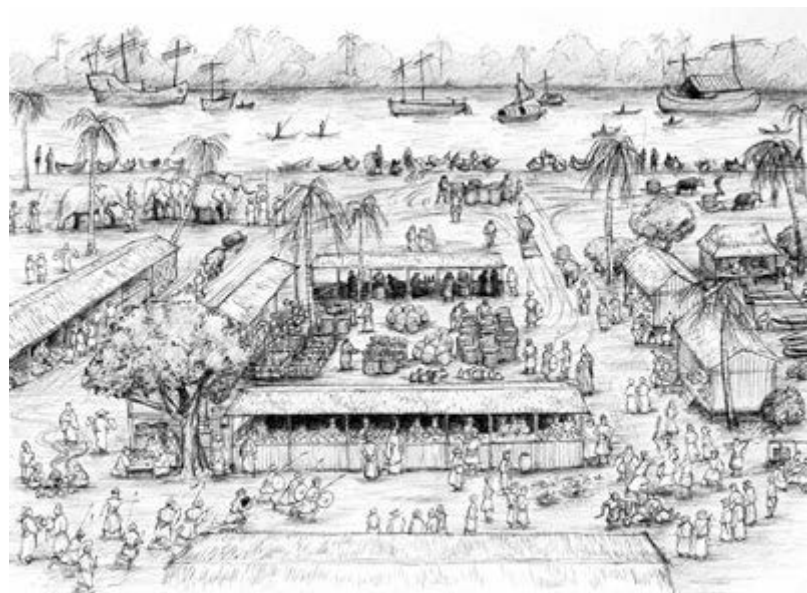
ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, during the hall's redevelopment. It was the first time human remains from early Singapore have been found, according to the centre's report, and no others have been found since.

Archaeologist Lim Chen Sian told The Straits Times: "If we do further analysis, we could find out what they were eating and what their diet was like. Did they lose their adult teeth through trauma? Did they get whacked on their heads? Was there a battle, catastrophe or calamity where some houses got burned down and the teeth are all that has survived?"

He noted that there was also the threat of pirates and bandits in early Singapore.

The 2010 evaluation and 2011 rescue archaeological excavations near the Singapore River uncovered a total of 654kg of artefacts and ecofacts (natural remains), according to the report. Some 69 per cent were from the Temasek period – the 1300s to 1600s.

The dig was conducted during the \$158 million refurbishment of the Victoria Theatre and Victoria Concert Hall under the auspices of



RARE FIND continued on B2

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AVA can make arrests for offences under 9 Acts

Statutory board's detention of Platinum Dogs Club operator was under Animals and Birds Act

Ng Huiwen

The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) is authorised to make arrests for offences that fall under nine Acts and their subsidiary legislation.

According to its website, these are: AVA Act, Animals and Birds Act, Control of Plants Act, Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act, Feeding Stuffs Act, Fisheries Act, Sale of Food Act, Wholesome Meat and Fish Act, and Wild Animals and Birds Act.

News reports on Monday that the operator of pet boarding facility Platinum Dogs Club has been arrested by the AVA for alleged animal welfare offences raised questions among social media users over the powers of the authority to investi-

Under the Animals and Birds Act, which can be found on Singapore Statutes Online, a director-general of agri-food and veterinary services may be appointed to administer the Act and any other written law.

gate and prosecute offenders.

In response to a Facebook post on the issue, user Rohaizat Haikal wrote yesterday: "AVA can make arrests? This is something new to me."

Others, such as user Loh Shi Wei, wondered if only police officers have the powers to do so.

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and National Development Sun Xueling first revealed in a Facebook post on Monday that the 30-year-old operator had been arrested, even as investigations into the facility are set to continue.

The AVA confirmed that the arrest was made under the Animals and Birds Act.

Platinum Dogs Club, a pet boarding house in Bukit Panjang, was raided by the authorities on Dec 29 and 31, following complaints that pets in its care were allegedly mistreated.

The AVA later took temporary custody of animals found at the premises.

Under the Animals and Birds Act,

which can be found on Singapore Statutes Online, a director-general of agri-food and veterinary services may be appointed to administer the Act and any other written law.

The director-general may also appoint, in writing, any public officer or AVA officer to be an authorised officer to carry out the powers or duties under the Act.

This means that besides police officers, authorised officers are able to carry out searches and seize animals or items in order to ascertain if an offence under the Act has been committed.

The authorised officer may also arrest a suspect without a warrant if there is reason to believe that a crime has been committed, and carry out certain actions, such as collecting statements, as part of the AVA's investigation powers.

Some other statutory boards, such as the National Environment Agency, similarly have the power to administer laws.

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6 highlights from the Victoria Concert Hall dig

1 Rare Yuan Dynasty blue-and-white Chunping porcelain vase

This vessel features grape and vine motifs, and a classical scroll on its foot ring. There is no record of a similar vessel with the same design motif and it is, at present, the only known specimen of its kind.

2 Fragment of blue-and-white porcelain from shoulder of Meiping vase

This vase is decorated with a cloud and lotus motif. It employs the underglaze painting technique utilising cobalt to achieve the distinct blue decorating the ceramic. Blue-and-white porcelain was produced only between 1330 and 1352, during the Yuan Dynasty, at Jingdezhen industry kiln complex in Jiangxi province, China.

3 Chinese chess piece

This provides evidence for gaming and recreation activities during the Temasek period. This stoneware Chinese chess piece bears the incised marker of Shuai (marshal or general) in Chinese script.



4 Head of a mammal figurine

The ornamental porcelain figurines of mammals, such as the head of a horse or camel, were also discovered.



5 Human teeth

Archaeologist Lim Chen Sian notes that it is extremely rare to find any human remains from pre-modern archaeological sites in Singapore due to the tropical environment. In this case, 45 individual adult teeth were recovered from the excavation zone.



6 Fishing hook and bell trinket

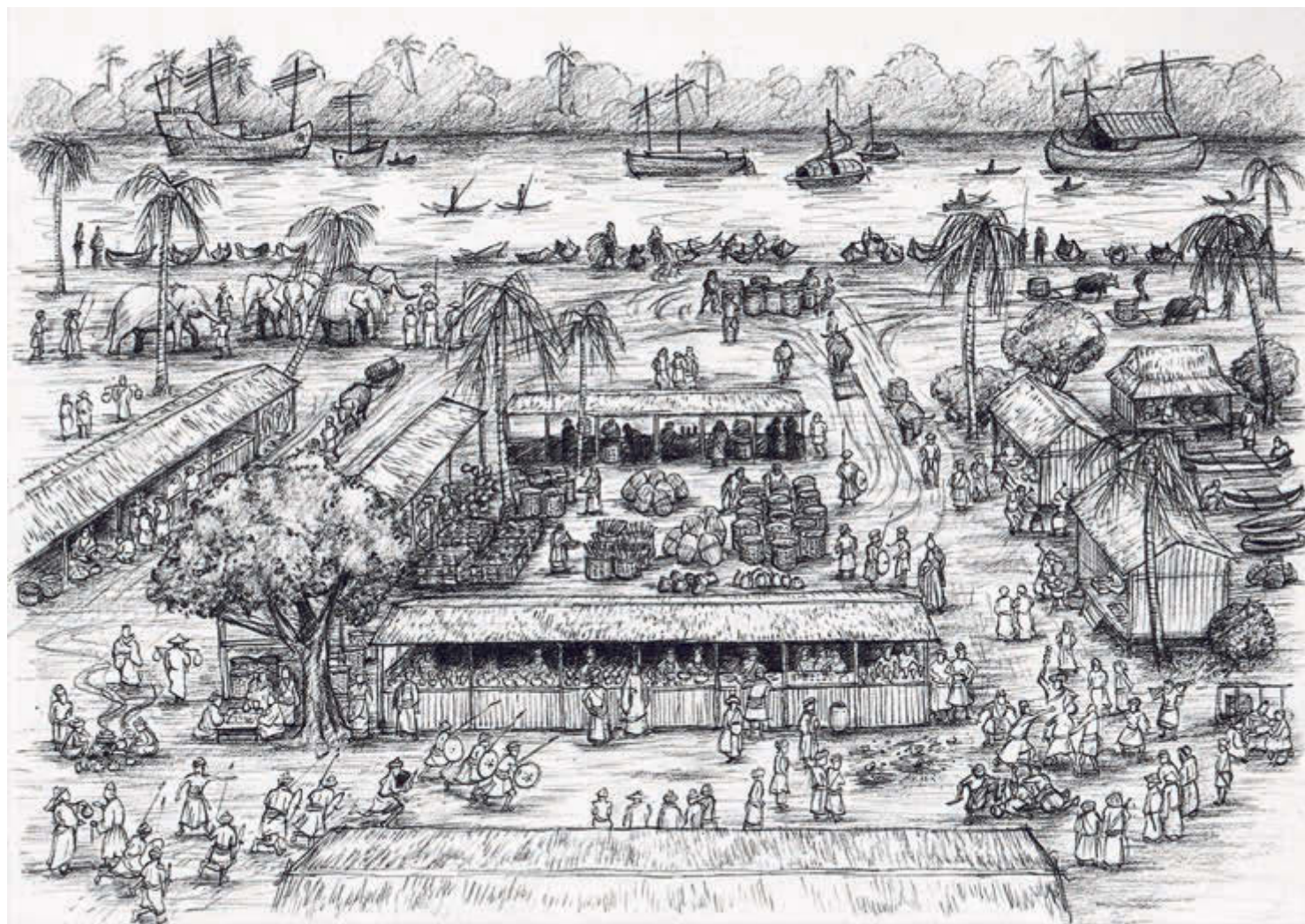
These items were likely produced locally during the Temasek period. Other archaeological digs have pointed to the island having its own metal-working manufacturing facility at the site of the Parliament House building.



The rare Yuan Dynasty blue-and-white Chunping porcelain vase.



Fragment of blue-and-white porcelain from shoulder of Meiping vase.



Left: An artist's impression of what the site could have looked like in the 14th century.

The Victoria Concert Hall site appears to be an extension of a commercial neighbourhood within the larger Singapore River bank precinct. Mr Lim, the archaeologist, says the volume and variety of artefacts uncovered during the dig demonstrate that the lawn in front of the Victoria Theatre was an active marketplace or commercial square, and Victoria Concert Hall was also home to a range of activities that potentially included small cottage industries for copper or metal work and shops retailing a variety of wares. The Victoria Concert Hall site also had residences.

cloud and lotus motif, was also discovered.

Mr Lim noted that blue-and-white porcelain was produced for about 22 years during the Yuan Dynasty at the Jingdezhen industry kiln complex in Jiangxi province.

These finds help paint a more detailed picture of the Temasek period, of which there are few text records. Mr Lim said: "It just goes to show how rich the Singapore River was as a settlement and how potentially vibrant it was."

Other finds from the dig included a fishing hook and bell trinket most likely used by locals, a Chinese chess piece and a single Spanish silver coin. A brick wall dating back to the 1950s was also uncovered.

In the report, Mr Lim said serious resources will need to be allocated to the processing of the artefacts and data, as well as their conservation and long-term archiving and maintenance.

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Blue-and-white porcelain a rare find

FROM B1

the Singapore Heritage Society. It received partial funding from the National Heritage Board.

Most of the artefacts were ceramics.

The pieces included a blue-and-white 19cm-tall and 13cm-wide vessel with grape and vine motifs, and a classical scroll on its foot ring. It dates back to the Chinese Yuan period (1279–1368).

It is a rare find since very few

Yuan period blue-and-white porcelain vases have been discovered worldwide, said Mr Lim.

It is on display at the National Museum.

A piece of a porcelain vase from the same period, decorated with a

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Scoot flight turns back to Changi soon after take-off

Melbourne-bound plane returns after pilots discover fault with its weather radar component

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent

In the latest operational hiccup to hit Scoot, a Singapore-Melbourne flight which left Changi Airport yesterday morning had to make a U-turn shortly after take-off.

Flight TR24, which departed at 11am, was forced to return 48 minutes into the flight after pilots discovered a fault with the aircraft's weather radar component.

Confirming the incident, a Scoot spokesman told The Straits Times

that the Boeing 787 landed safely in Singapore at 12.49pm.

Affected customers were provided with meals while the fault was rectified. The plane eventually departed at about 6pm, she said.

As a result of the disruption, the return flight from Melbourne, TR25, was retimed to depart today at 7.30am local time instead of its original timing at 10.30pm local time yesterday.

Affected passengers were informed of the change in advance via e-mail and SMS, the airline said.

The incident is the latest in a

string of flight disruptions that have hit Scoot because of technical issues with its B-787 fleet.

Since Nov 26, there have been about 10 major disruptions which have led to delays of up to 56 hours for affected passengers.

Scoot, the budget arm of Singapore Airlines, is one of several carriers hit by a series of engine glitches that have affected Rolls-Royce's Trent 1000, which powers the B-787s.

The turbine blades inside the Trent 1000 "package C" engines are corroding and cracking at a

quicker-than-expected rate.

In April last year, the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States gave notice that B-787s fitted with the Rolls-Royce engine cannot operate more than 140 minutes away from an airport they can divert to in an emergency – down from 330 minutes before.

This was after the European Aviation Safety Agency ordered additional maintenance checks on the Trent 1000.

Scoot, which has 18 B-787s, has at least one plane grounded at any one time. Rolls-Royce has promised

that the problem will be fixed, but experts caution that this could take many months.

Like many other budget airlines that operate with tight schedules and limited resources, including aircraft spare parts, the technical issues have led to significant delays for Scoot travellers, many of whom felt Scoot could have done a much better job taking care of their needs while they were stranded.

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SEE FORUM B9



The incident is the latest in a string of flight disruptions to hit Scoot because of technical issues with its B-787 fleet. Since Nov 26, there have been about 10 major disruptions which have led to delays of up to 56 hours for affected passengers. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

NTU don accused of rash driving, 2 other offences

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A Nanyang Technological University (NTU) associate professor was driving his car along the Pan-Island Expressway when he allegedly endangered the safety of another motorist.

Wang Jianliang is accused of driving in a rash manner by intentionally applying the emergency brake twice, causing Mr Samuel Lim Yong Soon's car to hit the rear of his vehicle on March 16, 2017.

According to court documents, Wang allegedly used criminal force on Mr Lim by grabbing the latter's right arm at around 6pm that day.

He is also accused of committing mischief by hitting the bonnet of Mr Lim's car four times, causing \$2,171 in damage.

On Monday, a district court heard that Wang is expected to plead guilty to the offences on Jan 22.

Wang, 60, who first appeared in court in November last year, faces three charges – driving in a rash manner, using criminal force and committing mischief.

According to the NTU website, the Singaporean was a lecturer at the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics between 1988 and 1990. He has been with NTU's School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering since 1990.

Wang is represented by lawyer Eugene Thuraisingam and is out on bail of \$5,000.

NTU told The Straits Times on Monday that it would be inappro-



Wang Jianliang also faces charges of using criminal force and of committing mischief.

priate to comment on the case as it is before the courts.

If convicted of driving in a rash manner, Wang can be jailed for up to six months and fined up to \$2,500.

And if convicted of committing mischief, he can be jailed for up to two years and fined.

Wang is not the first local academic in recent months to make the headlines over offences committed while driving a vehicle.

National University of Singapore professor Henry Yeung Wai Chung, 50, was fined the maximum \$5,000 in November last year after pleading guilty to dangerous driving. He was also disqualified from driving all classes of vehicles for 13 months.

Yeung had been caught on video driving his Maserati in a dangerous manner along Lorong Chuan in September last year.

He also has a history of traffic offences. The court heard that he had been fined up to \$200 for each of his three earlier offences committed between 2012 and 2016 – namely for speeding, inconsiderate driving and careless driving.

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Oil giant Shell fined \$400,000 for fire

Safety lapse in 2015 at refinery on Pulau Bukom resulted in blaze that injured six workers

Shaffiq Alkhatib

Oil giant Shell has been fined \$400,000 for a health and safety breach that led to a fire at the Pulau Bukom petroleum refinery which left six workers with burns.

Two groups of workers were carrying out different tasks in close proximity, resulting in flammable vapours coming into contact with sparks from a nearby blowtorch on Aug 21, 2015.

Indian nationals Jaswant Singh and Saravarapu Suresh Kumar suffered burns affecting up to 70 per cent of their bodies.

Two other Indian nationals, a Filipino and a Myanmar national also suffered burns. No one died in the incident.

Yesterday, Shell Eastern Petroleum, which carries out refinery works at the facility, became the third company to be fined \$400,000 for an offence under the Workplace Safety and Health Act, after pleading guilty last October.

The Straits Times understands that this is the first case involving a major hazard installation – a place where large quantities of toxic and flammable substances are stored or used, or both.

SMRT was fined \$400,000 in February 2017 for safety lapses leading to an accident that killed two people near Pasir Ris MRT station the previous year.

Jurong Shipyard was fined the same amount in November 2017 over a 2012 incident in which an oil rig tilted, injuring 89 people.

In the current case, Ministry of Manpower (MOM) prosecutor Delvinder Singh told the court that Mr Saravarapu was using a blowtorch from an oxyacetylene cylinder to cut some pipes. Mr Jaswant Singh was assisting him.

Other workers, who performed “cold works”, were tasked with re-



The fire at Shell's Pulau Bukom petroleum refinery on Aug 21, 2015, left four Indian nationals, a Filipino and a Myanmar national with burns. The Ministry of Manpower said the works of two groups of workers in the same vicinity were not coordinated, which led to flammable vapours generated by one group being ignited by sparks from the other, causing the fire.
ST FILE PHOTO

moving a joint connection to a valve. When one of the workers opened the valve to start the draining process, flammable vapours came into contact with sparks, causing the fire.

The MOM said yesterday that the blaze was contained and extinguished by the Bukom Emergency Response Team within 30 minutes.

The ministry added: “Investigations revealed that there was a systemic failure in Shell's oversight to check for compatibility of different work activities carried out within the same vicinity at the same time.

“The hot works and cold works carried out by the two groups of workers in the same vicinity were

INADEQUATE CONTROL MEASURES

The lives of workers and the public could have been put at risk because adequate control measures were not properly implemented. Even though there was no loss of life in this case, the potential for more severe consequences was evident.

MR GO HENG HUAT, Ministry of Manpower's director of the Major Hazards Department.

not coordinated, thus creating a situation where flammable vapours generated by the cold works were ignited by sparks from the hot works.”

In a statement, MOM's director of the Major Hazards Department Go Heng Huat said that the refinery, as a major hazard installation, must properly manage safety and risk-control measures.

Mr Go added: “The lives of workers and the public could have been put at risk because adequate control measures were not properly implemented. Even though there was no loss of life in this case, the potential for more severe consequences was evident.

“MOM will continue to strengthen its enforcement of companies' workplace safety and health practices, including prosecution when there have been infringements that put the lives of workers at risk.”

Shell said yesterday: “Since the incident in August 2015, we have extended our full cooperation to the relevant authorities, learnt from the incident and implemented improvements across our site.

“Incidents like this are unacceptable and we are committed – at all levels of our organisation – to continuously strive towards an incident-free workplace.”

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4 funeral parlour sites to be launched over 10 years

Choo Yun Ting

Four new funeral parlour sites will be launched for development over the next 10 years or so, the National Environment Agency (NEA) said yesterday.

These developments will help to meet the anticipated growing demand for after-death facilities and services as Singapore's population ages, the agency added.

The four earmarked sites are in Ang Mo Kio Street 63, near the SBS Transit bus depot; the industrial area in Bukit Batok Street 23; Woodlands Industrial Park E8; and Mandai Road, near the Mandai Crematorium and Columbarium.

The sites will be progressively launched over the next decade or so, and are in various parts of Singapore to provide a better distribution of funeral parlour services for bereaved families and their visitors.

NEA said the annual demand for wake spaces is expected to grow along with the increase in resident deaths, which are projected to rise to about 40,000 by 2040.

The future funeral parlour complexes will include designs such as visual barriers to minimise impact to neighbours.

Potential design additions also in-

clude measures to ensure that the traffic situation around funeral parlours is manageable and that parking facilities at the complex and surrounding areas are adequate.

NEA will be engaging neighbouring stakeholders to gather feedback and incorporate relevant suggestions into the development of the sites.

It said there is an increasing demand for wakes held in purpose-built funeral parlours, although funeral wakes are mostly held at Housing Board void decks and multi-purpose pavilions.

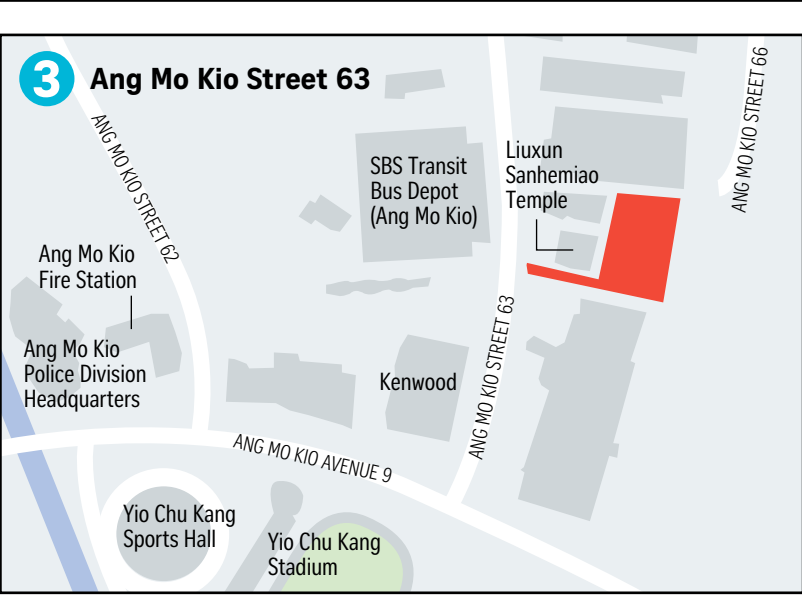
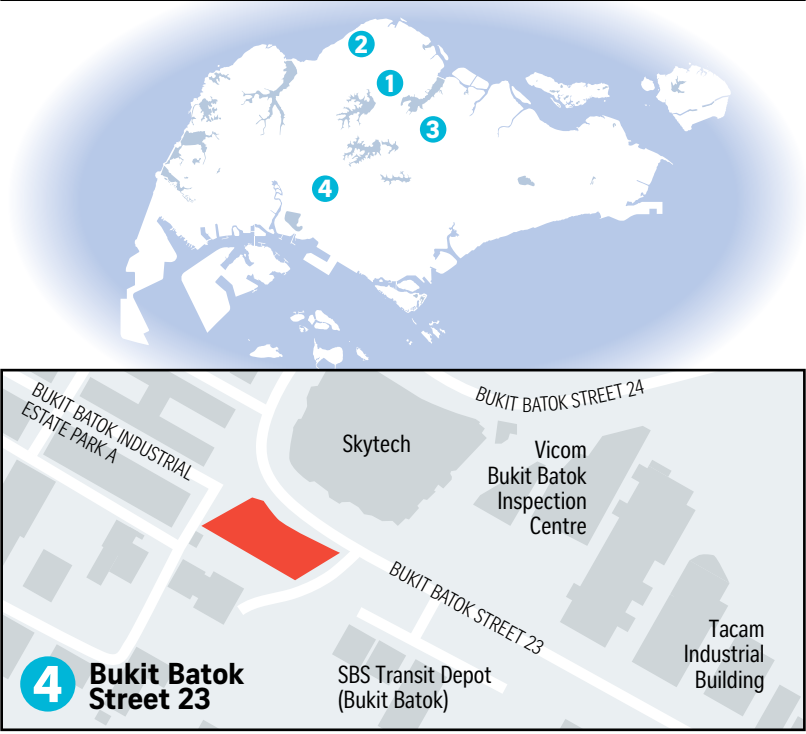
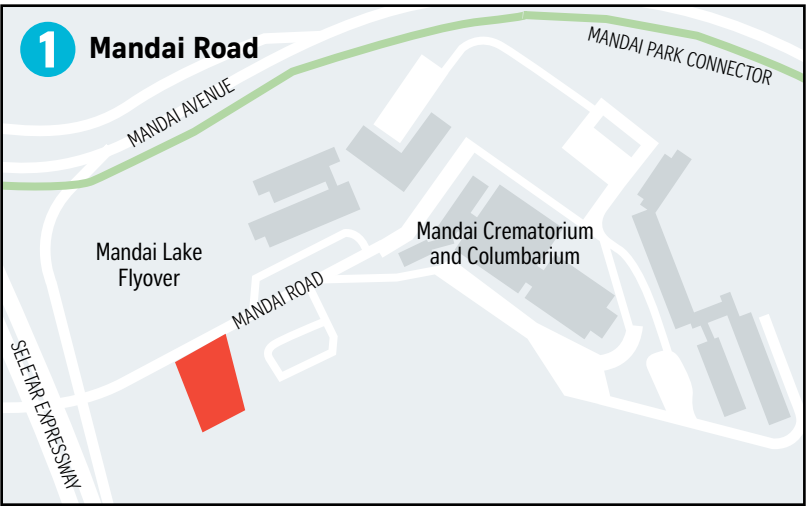
“NEA will continue to work with land use planners to meet the long-term demand for funeral spaces and ensure that they are ready ahead of demand,” the agency said.

Mr Delon Goh, director of Kong Heng Metal Polishing, which is located a few blocks from one of the designated funeral parlour sites, said he does not think the development would affect its business, which has been in Ang Mo Kio Street 64 for almost 20 years.

“It's okay because we're not residents. We're a factory, we're not living there,” Mr Goh said.

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Additional reporting by Felicia Choo



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Five months behind bars for officer who forged victim's statement

Policewoman forged statement of victim of alleged molestation when she was unable to interview her

Shaffiq Alkhatib

When a senior police officer was unable to meet a molestation victim to interview her, she decided to speed up the investigation by forging the woman's statement.

Kalaivani Kalimuthu's account gave the impression that the victim did not mind being touched and recommended that no further action be taken.

But when the woman was interviewed later, she denied making the statement – and the senior staff sergeant's deceit was uncovered.

Kalaivani was sentenced to five months' jail yesterday after pleading guilty last month to a forgery charge. She was an investigation officer at Ang Mo Kio Police Division between September 2011 and November 2016.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Stephanie Chew said the victim lodged a police report and gave a statement on March 27, 2016, saying she had been molested.

Kalaivani was assigned to the case the following month.

She was supposed to interview

the woman but "encountered difficulty in arranging an interview", the court heard.

She then forged the statement in her office in November 2016.

In the statement, Kalaivani said that the woman had also touched the alleged molester and did not mind being touched herself.

Kalaivani forged the woman's signature and forwarded the investigation papers to her officer-in-charge on Nov 25, 2016, recommending that no further action be taken.

The case was later reassigned to Senior Investigation Officer (SIO) Pang Shijie.

In December 2016, the investigation papers were sent to the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC), recommending that the victim be warned for providing false information.

But the AGC directed the police to record a further statement from the woman, who denied making the earlier statement when SIO Pang interviewed her in June 2017.

There was also no record of the woman visiting the station on the date that Kalaivani purportedly



Kalaivani Kalimuthu decided to speed up the investigation by forging the statement of an alleged molestation victim after she "encountered difficulty in arranging an interview" with the woman. Kalaivani has been suspended from the police force since Sept 14, 2017. ST FILE PHOTO

recorded her statement.

Kalaivani has been suspended from the Singapore Police Force (SPF) since Sept 14, 2017.

In a statement, the SPF said that its officers are expected to uphold the law and maintain the highest standards of conduct and integrity, adding: "We deal severely with officers who break the law, including charging them in court."

For forgery, Kalaivani could have been jailed for up to four years and fined.

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EXPECTED TO UPHOLD LAW

We deal severely with officers who break the law, including charging them in court.



THE SINGAPORE POLICE FORCE, in a statement.

Cop who made unauthorised access to computer jailed

After a traffic accident with a motorcyclist, a police senior staff sergeant made an unauthorised access to the police computer system to retrieve the biker's report.

Yap How Tat also took photographs of the report.

But when he was seen doing this, the 35-year-old deleted the photos.

Yap, who was with the Choa Chu Kang Neighbourhood Police Centre (NPC), was jailed for four weeks yesterday.

He had pleaded guilty to one count each of making an unauthorised access to a computer, and destroying documents in order to prevent their production as evidence.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Thiagesh Sukumaran said the accident took place in Yishun Avenue 8 at around 4am on April 16, 2017.

It was not mentioned in court documents if Yap was on duty at the time of the accident.

The biker, whose details were not revealed in court documents, was sent to Khoo Teck Puat Hospital.

He made a road traffic accident report about four hours later.

At around 3.30am on April 17, Yap turned up at the Bukit Panjang NPC to lodge a road traffic accident report. He produced his warrant card and identified himself as a police senior staff sergeant.

The court heard that about 40 minutes later, Sergeant Quek Jun Cai, who was attending to him, realised he could not print the photographs of the accident scene that Yap had e-mailed over.

Sgt Quek, 28, had his colleague – 24-year-old Sgt Joel Lin Weiliang – help finalise the report while he left the area to print the photos.

When he was done, Sgt Lin moved the monitor of the computer terminal closer to Yap for him to read and verify the report. However, Yap claimed that he was unable to see it and insisted on using the computer terminal.

Sgt Lin allowed Yap, his senior in rank, to have access to the computer while continuing to monitor him. But Yap used it to access the biker's report without authority and snapped photos of it with his mobile phone.

When Sgt Lin caught him doing this, he immediately alerted his team leader, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Jasper Chua Qi Long, 31.

ASP Chua confronted Yap and asked him to hand over his mobile phone.

The senior staff sergeant did as he was told, but not before deleting the photos.

DPP Thiagesh urged District Judge Chay Yuen Fatt to sentence Yap to between four and six weeks' jail, stressing that this case involved a "significant abuse of authority".

For making an unauthorised access to the computer system, Yap could have been jailed for up to two years and fined up to \$5,000.

Shaffiq Alkhatib

4

Jail term in weeks for Yap How Tat.

The aftermath of a fire that broke out at Block 235 Toa Payoh Lorong 8 yesterday. Neighbours rushed to the scene to help put out the fire. The Singapore Civil Defence Force finally extinguished the fire with a water jet. PHOTO: SHIN MIN DAILY NEWS



Fire breaks out in Toa Payoh flat; neighbours lend a helping hand

Ruth Phang

Student Pierce Ng was watching YouTube videos on the sofa when he heard a loud bang, followed by people screaming, yesterday morning.

Assuming that it was a case of domestic disturbance, the 17-year-old ignored it and continued watching videos in his seventh-storey flat at Block 235 Toa Payoh Lorong 8.

Pierce, who is waiting for his O-level results, said he "didn't think too much of it".

"But when my helper went out, she saw a very big fire," he told The New Paper.

Stepping out of his flat, Pierce saw the fire that had engulfed the unit on the sixth storey, with thick grey smoke billowing up.

Together with his father and their domestic helper, he rushed to the scene with bottles and pails

filled with water.

They tried to put out the fire by splashing buckets of water.

Pierce said he also called the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) immediately.

An SCDF spokesman told The New Paper that officers responded to the incident at 8.52am and that the fire had broken out in the living room.

Another resident, Mr Ricarte Vicente, 42, an embalmer, said he saw the windows shatter.

Pierce said someone helped another resident living in the flat next door to escape.

The SCDF finally extinguished the fire with a water jet.

No one was at home at the time of the incident, and the SCDF confirmed there was no reported injury. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

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9.5m-tall lantern to usher in the Year of the Pig

The official light-up and opening ceremony of Chinatown's annual Chinese New Year celebrations are not due till Jan 20, but preparations have set people talking.

A 9.5m-tall lantern featuring several pigs and a *fu dai*, or fortune bag in Mandarin, has been installed near the junction of Eu Tong Sen Street, New Bridge Road and Upper Cross Street to welcome the Year of the Pig.

Other decorations include flowers and lanterns shaped like coins which bear festive greetings.

Netizens were divided over the decorations, with some calling the pig lantern ugly and scary, while others thought it was cute.

According to Chinese-language newspaper Shin Min Daily News, one woman said the pig perched atop the *fu dai* resembled braised pork.

This year's lanterns were designed by 11 students from the Singapore University of Technology and Design, which has collaborated, since 2012, with the Kreta Ayer-Kim Seng Citizens Consultative Committee, the organiser of the Chinatown celebrations.

The lanterns were handmade by 42 craftsmen from the Chinese city of Zigong, in Sichuan province, which is famous for its lantern festival, Shin Min reported.

The light-up will run from Jan 20 to March 6. The first day of Chinese New Year this year falls on Feb 5.

The opening ceremony will feature performances by troupes from Singapore and abroad, and a firecracker and fireworks display. A ticketed lion dance competition of top lion dance troupes from Singapore and the Asia-Pacific will be held in Kreta Ayer Square on Jan 26.

On Feb 4, a countdown party will be hosted by Media-corp artists, featuring performances of festive songs, skits and interactive games, as well as more firecrackers and fireworks. Lighted floats from the annual Chingay street parade, as part of Chingay 2019 @ Heartlands, will close off the celebrations on Feb 17.

Rei Kurohi



The lantern features several pigs and a *fu dai*, or fortune bag in Mandarin. It and other lanterns at this year's Chinatown Chinese New Year light-up were designed by 11 students from the Singapore University of Technology and Design, and handmade by 42 craftsmen from the Chinese city of Zigong, in Sichuan province. ST PHOTO: JOSEPH CHUA

Case issues second alert on online retailer

Consumers sent debt collection letters for purchases they didn't make on LuxStyle site

Ng Huiwen

Singapore's consumer watchdog issued a fresh warning against Danish online retailer LuxStyle yesterday, after consumers received letters from a debt collection firm last

month, asking them to pay for purchases they did not make.

The Consumers Association of Singapore (Case) said in a Facebook post it was aware that Collectius CMS had asked consumers to pay for debt allegedly owed to a company named Digital Sourcing, which was previously known as LuxStyle.

It reminded consumers that they are not obliged to make any payment to a business for goods or services that they did not explicitly agree to buy.

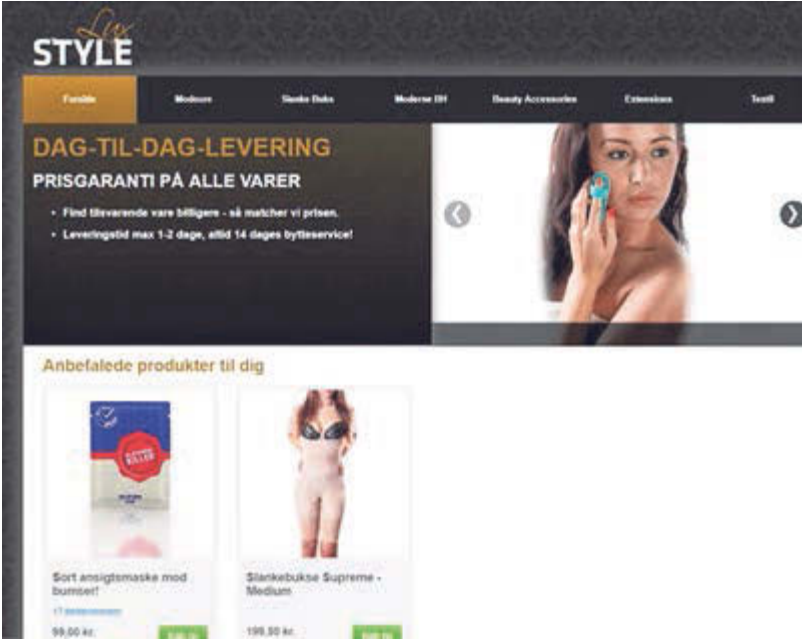
Previously, in May 2017, Case issued a consumer alert against LuxStyle, following 19 complaints that the firm had sent out payment notices to consumers after they had viewed certain products on the site but had not made any purchases.

For instance, IT professional Gaurav Kumar received several notices, via e-mail and post, warning him to pay \$50 for a pack of liquid facial masks, which LuxStyle insisted he had bought in January 2017. Mr Kumar had come across the LuxStyle-sponsored post on Facebook.

The firm also billed him a \$10 late penalty fee for each month that he did not pay up.

Mr Kumar set up a Facebook page, LuxStyle International Scam Singapore, to warn others, and lodged a police report in April 2017.

The police confirmed that a re-



The warning was issued after consumers received letters from debt collection firm Collectius CMS, demanding payment for products they had viewed, but had not purchased, on Danish online retail website LuxStyle. PHOTO: LUXSTYLE.DK

port was made and they are investigating the case.

Case said that since May 2017, it has received another 18 complaints against the business.

Then on Dec 7 last year, the watchdog was alerted to feedback that consumers had received letters from Collectius. It contacted Collectius, which has since ceased all re-

lated debt recovery action.

Consumers who have made payment to Collectius on this matter should be refunded in full, Case added.

Those with concerns may contact Case for assistance on 6100-0315 or go to www.case.org.sg

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg

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Fourth Malaysian man arrested over \$5.4m scam

A fourth Malaysian man has been arrested for his involvement in a 2017 impersonation scam in which a woman lost about \$5.4 million.

The 39-year-old man was arrested in Kuala Lumpur on Monday with the assistance of the Royal Malaysia Police, the Singapore Police Force said yesterday, when he was taken back to Singapore. He is expected to be charged over dishonestly receiving stolen property.

In 2017, a woman was tricked into believing that she had to surrender all her money to the authorities to assist in criminal investigations.

She delivered her money to different strangers at various locations in Singapore over a week, and the suspects left the country soon after, police said.

The fraudsters allegedly impersonated officials from China.

Three other Malaysians have been arrested for this alleged impersonation scam over the last year with the help of the Royal Malaysia Police. They have been charged with money-laundering offences.

If convicted, the latest suspect faces a jail term of up to five years, or a fine, or both.

The director of Singapore's Commercial Affairs Department, Mr David Chew, said that Singapore police will work closely with foreign law enforcement agencies to clamp down on transnational criminal networks.

The Singapore police also advised members of the public to take precautions when they receive unsolicited calls to surrender money, in order to avoid criminal investigations.

The precautions include ignoring such calls and callers' instructions as well as refraining from giving out personal information and bank details over websites or to phone callers.

Members of the public can seek scam-related advice by calling the anti-scam helpline on 1800-722-6688 or visiting www.scamalert.sg

Choo Yun Ting

Mr Alwyn Keng, who is paralysed from his waist down after a 2012 swimming pool accident, bounced back in his studies and life and hopes his story shows that people with special needs are just as capable.
ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN



ALL THANKS TO FAMILY, FRIENDS

I had to repay their faith in me.



MR ALWYN KENG, on his family and friends creating a strong support system for him as he underwent rehabilitation and returned to school so as to "lead a normal life" again.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

All it takes is a bit of patience and some special arrangements to level the playing field.



MR KENG, who took his examinations on a computer, thanks to arrangements made by his university, and who has benefited from a wheelchair-friendly environment at the bank he works for.

IT'S ALL RIGHT TO BE DIFFERENT

We shouldn't be afraid to be different. We just have to learn to accept it and move on.



MR KENG

GenerationGrit

Overcoming accident to regain purpose in life

An active student who loved sports, Mr Alwyn Keng saw his life dramatically altered after a swimming pool accident robbed him of the use of his legs in his first year in university. But he returned to school and, last year, graduated with top honours. He is now a bank analyst at HSBC. This is his story, the latest in a series on resilient millennials.

Cara Wong

It was six weeks into his time as a business student at the National University of Singapore (NUS) in 2012 when he had the accident that would change his life.

Mr Alwyn Keng had turned up at one of the pools on campus to prepare for an inter-hall swimming competition. Like so many times before, he jumped off the starting block and plunged into the pool.

But something went wrong this time. "I sank to the bottom of the pool. I couldn't move and shout for help, I just had to hold my breath and pray for the best," said Mr Keng, now 27.

He has no explanation for what happened, but is certain that he did not hit the bottom of the pool after diving in.

An alert friend noticed he was underwater for too long, and dived in to pull an unconscious Mr Keng out.

When he came to on land, he realised he could not move any part of his body below the neck.

He was rushed to hospital by ambulance.

"Everything happened so quickly. I was in shock and didn't know what was happening. Everyone was just rushing around," said Mr Keng.

At the hospital, doctors found that he had somehow fractured his neck and shattered a bone during the "freak accident".

The injury affected his spinal cord, impairing his movements.

But worse news was to come in the months during his recovery. He was told that he was likely to be permanently disabled.

"I initially thought that I would be fine after they removed the bone fragments that were affecting my spinal cord, but when I read up on my condition, I realised it's not as easy as that," he said.

While he regained some use of his hands and upper body after several months of rehabilitation, he remains paralysed from his waist down – a condition that is likely to be permanent, he said.

This realisation came as a huge blow to Mr Keng, an active student who represented his hall of resi-

dence at NUS in swimming, handball and football.

"I was shocked. I remember feeling helpless and quite devastated. I used to do a lot of sports, so it felt like a huge part of my life had been taken away from me," he said.

Since he was in primary school, he had been active in sports, often playing basketball or football during recess or after school, he said.

In National Junior College, he was a member of the school's track and field team, as a discus thrower.

As he struggled through rehabilitation to recover as many body functions as possible, he started to doubt his ability to return to school to "lead a normal life" again.

"I was scared. I used to be quite confident and sporty, but after such a traumatic injury, my confidence took a hit. I was uncertain how people would view me," he said.

"I think I had a bit of an inferiority complex, since I thought I couldn't be the person I used to be."

But he had the support of Dr Helen Chai, assistant dean of NUS Business School, who visited him frequently while he was in hospital, to persuade him to return to school.

Dr Chai even arranged for him to drop by the school to attend a lecture, just to get a feel of the school environment again, Mr Keng said.

It took a lot of convincing, but in the end, he "gave in to her nagging" and decided to return to school.

In December 2013, after his discharge from hospital, Mr Keng resumed his studies.

To his surprise, he managed to do well in his first semester, scoring two As and a B for the three modules that he took.

That turned out to be the confidence booster he needed.

"It was evidence that I could achieve so much more – since I managed to recover to the extent that I could go back to school and do well in my (studies)," said Mr Keng.

He saw his studies as a way to have a "future to look forward to", in spite of his disability.

By then, he was able to get around the school independently in a wheelchair and had largely regained control of his upper body.

His father would also drive him to school and back to their Housing Board flat in Choa Chu Kang.

He was determined to do well for the sake of his parents.

Both his parents are 55 years old now. His father works as a freelancer in advertising while his mother works at a bank. He has a younger brother aged 26 who just graduated from the Singapore University of Social Sciences.

Over the next four years, Mr Keng worked hard, often sleeping less to prepare for classes.

In 2014, he received the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities for his good results in school.

He later joined the NUS Enablers club, a student interest group for special needs students, and became its vice-president.

A former hall mate, Mr Justinn

Leong, 29, said he has seen Mr Keng mature in the years since his accident. It was Mr Leong who pulled Mr Keng out of the pool in 2012.

"You would expect the person to start thinking that the world has abandoned him and that he has no control over life," said Mr Leong.

"But, on the contrary, Alwyn has always seemed to have control over his own life. He knows he won't let his past stop him from achieving what he wants to achieve."

Mr Keng graduated with top honours from NUS last year, two years after his peers graduated, and is now working as a bank analyst at HSBC.

Looking back, he credits his family and friends for creating a strong support system. Through it all, his friends and family never gave up on him. "I had to repay their faith in me," he said.

He hopes his story shows that people with special needs are just as capable. "All it takes is a bit of patience and some special arrangements to level the playing field," he said.

For example, his university made arrangements for him to take his examinations on a computer.

The bank, too, has ensured that his working environment is a wheelchair-friendly one.

The biggest lesson he has learnt, which he hopes others will share, is to accept that everyone is different.

"Everyone goes through life at a different pace; there's no blueprint for when and how we should live our lives.

"We shouldn't be afraid to be different. We just have to learn to accept it and move on."

carawang@sph.com.sg

GENERATION GRIT

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Swimming accident left him paralysed



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FORUM

cheeky's TAKE

Forefathers wouldn't have come if colonial rule was oppressive

In his letter, Mr Anthony Oei said that Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival 1819 did not mark the founding of modern Singapore, rather, the beginning of modern Singapore was in 1959, the year the People's Action Party took over the government (Raffles' arrival did not mark founding of modern S'pore; Jan 5).

Mr Oei's view is in contradiction with that once expressed by

Singapore's first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, who acknowledged Raffles as the founder of modern Singapore.

He had said: "If Raffles had not come here in 1819 to establish a trading post, my great-grandfather would not have migrated to Singapore."

Indeed, the vast majority of our multi-ethnic forefathers arrived here from 1819 to 1959; they would

not have been coming in droves to settle had the colonial-era Singapore been such an oppressive place.

Mr Lee wisely avoided the virulent brand of anti-colonialism espoused by other former colonies that ultimately sent international investors packing.

His government recognised history for what it was, and had no desire to rewrite the past by renaming streets or removing monuments.

Hence, it is odd that Singapore should now be so reticent about celebrating its bicentennial.

Loke Hoe Kit

Mark women's contributions for S'pore bicentennial

It is a pity that the Singapore Bicentennial Office (SBO) did not include at least one woman when they decided to erect statues of other pioneers of Singapore to stand alongside the statues of Sir Stamford Raffles (Four S'pore pioneers join Raffles in bicentennial project; Jan 5).

One woman who could have been considered is Hajjah Fatimah Sulaiman, who was a successful merchant and philanthropist.

Before Raffles had taken his first step onto Singapore soil, Hajjah Fatimah was already running a thriving trading business.

In the 1840s, she donated land and money for the construction of a mosque in Kampong Glam, which was named after her and gazetted as a national monument in 1973.

She also built homes for the needy.

Hajjah Fatimah was an early example of a woman who made significant contributions to Singapore.

There were many others, and I hope that their contributions will be acknowledged and celebrated.

The Singapore Women's Hall of Fame was set up in 2014 to recognise these achievements and share their stories, and has currently inducted a total of 152 outstanding women.

The SBO could visit the Singapore Women's Hall of Fame and consider how some of the women listed on the website could be included in its celebration of Singapore's history.

Margaret Thomas (Ms)

Hajjah Fatimah was an early example of a woman who made significant contributions to Singapore. There were many others, and I hope that their contributions will be acknowledged and celebrated.

Accept colonial past as part of S'pore story

Mr Anthony Oei in his letter (Raffles' arrival did not mark founding of modern S'pore; Jan 5) has a point in that the eventual success of Singapore was not what was envisioned for it 200 years earlier by Sir Stamford Raffles.

He was also right to say that the subsequent colonial government and the infrastructure put in place to make it an attractive trading port

were the foundation of today's city-state.

Even Singapore's founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, who set the country on its journey towards modernisation, was a student of Raffles Institution and subsequently studied in the land of the colonial rulers in Cambridge University.

While we can find many faults

with our former colonial rulers, let us take the bicentennial celebrations as a chance to remember the past, teach it to the next generation, and use our inherited legacy to wow visitors.

We need to come to terms with and accept our colonial past as part of the patrimony which binds all of us who call this land home.

Chai Shiew Chee

THE STRAITS TIMES

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Who among these 11 finalists is your choice for The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2018 award?

This award, in partnership with UBS for the fourth year running, seeks to honour the positive impact made by Singaporeans and celebrate the triumph of the human spirit. Each of these nominees has a powerful story that will resonate with, and inspire, all of us. Read more about them at str.sg/soty2018 and tell us who should be the winner by Jan 15, 6pm.

Cast your vote now at str.sg/soty18vote

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Harbhajan Singh The veteran nurse led a team of more than 100 nurses in the 2003 fight against Sars, the severe acute respiratory syndrome. Today, at the age of 78, Harbhajan Singh continues to work at the very hospital he first joined as a young man aged 25.	Annabelle Kwok At 26, NeuralBay founder Annabelle Kwok has already made her mark in artificial intelligence. She also wears many other hats as mathematician, hardware hacker, sportswoman, arts performer and do-gooder.	Teo Yee Ming Hai Sing Catholic School teacher Teo Yee Ming has led the school's robotics team from obscurity to success on the world stage. The school team has won the world's most prestigious robotics competition four times.	Elizabeth Tan Entrepreneur Elizabeth Tan grew her father's shoe shop into a global chain with 50 stores. She is also a humanitarian who set up Sight To Sky, a charity which organises annual mobile eye clinics in India, Pakistan and Nepal.	Bjorn Low From a small social enterprise, Bjorn Low's Edible Garden City is now a thriving business. It designs and builds food gardens, supplies greens to restaurants, and trains and employs people from vulnerable or marginalised segments.	Kenneth and Adeline Thong The Thongs not only open their house to young people to live in for free, but they also recreate a home within a house for them. Both left their jobs to be present in the lives of young people.
Siti Noor Mastura Siti Noor Mastura rose above childhood poverty and overcame the odds to launch two non-profit groups. One distributes halal groceries to the poor and the other promotes honest discussions between people of different faiths.	Nizar Mohamed Shariff and Free Food For All In 2014, Nizar Mohamed Shariff set up Free Food For All, a charity that provides free cooked meals for the needy. The charity cooks up to 100,000 meals a year for 3,000 elderly or low-income residents living in rental flats.	Douglas Yeo and Poh Kok Wee Veteran diver Douglas Yeo, 50, risked his life to help with the evacuation of the last five Thai boys who were trapped in a cave. Age also did not deter Poh Kok Wee, 57, from helping scout for alternative cave entrances to reach the boys.	Teo You Yenn Sociology researcher Teo You Yenn published a book of essays on the lives of people who live in HDB rental flats. This Is What Inequality Looks Like is a bestseller that has sparked a national conversation on socio-economic inequality in Singapore.	Robert Chew Robert Chew, 69, has donated blood a total of 184 times. He started when he was 18 years old and donates blood three to four times a year. He has drained his body of blood 18 times over his lifetime as a donor.	

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Malaysia should appreciate S'pore's goodwill gestures

I hope the Malaysian government will change its approach and show its appreciation for Singapore's help in supplying additional treated water at the same price as under the 1962 Water Agreement purely on a goodwill basis (Singapore supplies additional treated water to Malaysia at Johor's request; Jan 6).
According to the Water Agreement, Singapore is required to supply only five million gallons per day (mgd) of treated water, but in practice, Singapore has been

providing 16 mgd of treated water to Johor at its request – all for the same price of 50 sen (17 Singapore cents) per 1,000 gallons.
Singapore could have charged higher prices, but in the spirit of good neighbourliness, Singapore has not even brought the topic up.
This is despite it costing Singapore RM2.40 to treat every 1,000 gallons of water.
Instead of wrangling over raw water prices, Malaysia can cooperate with Singapore to do much more to benefit the people

from both sides.
With its large land mass, Malaysia could encourage more joint ventures with Singapore to expand agricultural production to boost its food supply.
As Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said last year, Singapore and Malaysia are like twins and hence, both nations should pursue win-win cooperation and focus on our respective domestic priorities to achieve better bilateral relations.
Paul Chan Poh Hai

Not fair to compare Scoot and SIA

I disagree with Ms Stacy Wong's points regarding Scoot's management of the flight delay on two grounds (Scoot needs to take serious look at crisis management method; Jan 5).
First, for an airline a technical delay does not constitute a "crisis".

An accident with a loss of lives, or a serious financial problem, would be a crisis.
Second, Scoot is a low-cost carrier and sells its services as such. These airlines are known to provide a level of service at airports and other customer service areas often

referred to as "no-frills".
If passengers want Singapore Airlines (SIA) service levels, then they should pay SIA fares and travel with SIA. Comparing what SIA did when faced with a delay with what Scoot did is not a fair comparison.
Gerard de Vaz

Check windows regularly to prevent them falling

We refer to the letter, (Onus on HDB to resolve issue of fallen windows; Dec 22, 2018).
All windows have to be designed and installed according to specified standards and meet performance requirements under the Building Control Regulations.
HDB designs and installs windows according to prevailing industry standards. From 1987 to 1998, aluminium rivets were used for casement windows in HDB

flats, as this was the accepted industry standard internationally.
As standards improved, HDB switched to stainless steel rivets for casement windows in 1998, ahead of the revised industry standards that were adopted in 2000.
To assist flat owners, HDB offered a one-off goodwill rivet replacement programme in 2004, for flats which had aluminium rivets for casement windows installed by HDB.

Under this programme, HDB co-paid 50 per cent of the cost of replacing the aluminium rivets with stainless steel rivets.
The number of falling window incidents across private and public housing has dropped from a peak of 125 in 2005 to an average of about 45 cases yearly in the last five years.
The majority of those that occurred in HDB flats involved windows that were installed by home owners during renovation.

SAF's anti-smoking rules in line with national policies

We refer to Mr Sia Chuan Han's letter (How will new smoking age rule be enforced in army camps?; Jan 3).
The SAF's smoking prohibition policies are aligned with national policies to promote a smoke-free lifestyle in Singapore.
Servicemen below the minimum legal age are prohibited from smoking in all Ministry of Defence/ Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) premises.
Unit commanders and the SAF military police conduct checks in all camps and bases, and servicemen who break the smoking

law will be disciplined.
On top of this, the SAF conducts regular smoking cessation talks and workshops for our servicemen.
SAF medical officers and counsellors also offer resources and advice, and support servicemen who are smokers to quit smoking and adopt healthy lifestyles.
The SAF, in partnership with the Health Promotion Board, also trains SAF servicemen to serve as smoking cessation peer counsellors.
Goh Si Mien (Colonel)
Head Joint Manpower Department Singapore Armed Forces

IMDA closely monitors SingPost's service standards

We appreciate Mr Wong Boon Hong's feedback (IMDA should monitor SingPost's service standards; Jan 4).
The Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) recognises the importance of an efficient and reliable public postal system.
We regulate and closely monitor the performance of SingPost's postal services through our Quality of Service (QoS) standards.
Among other things, SingPost is required to deliver at least 98 per cent of local basic letters by the next working day.
IMDA also regularly reviews its

postal policies and frameworks to ensure reliable and quality postal services for consumers.
We take a serious view of cases of misdelivered or lost mail, and require that SingPost look into each incident and step up quality checks to ensure that letters are delivered correctly. IMDA will act if SingPost breaches the QoS framework.
We will work with SingPost to get in touch with Mr Wong to address his concerns.
Karen Low (Ms)
Cluster Director, Communications & Marketing Infocomm Media Development Authority

Air fare prices change for range of reasons

We refer to Ms Madeline Lim's letter (Short-changed when SIA slashed ticket price; Dec 31, 2018).
While in general air fares tend to rise nearer to departure, we operate in a dynamic environment and as such, air fares can fluctuate for a variety of reasons, including competition.
Consumers make a value assessment of the fare level, associated conditions and the surety of confirming a seat at the time of purchase, with tickets thereafter governed by the terms and conditions applicable at the time of purchase.
We note that, in this case, Ms Lim had purchased a non-refundable fare. We will be in touch with Ms Lim on her purchase experience.
Andrew Budiman
Senior Manager Customer Contact Services Singapore Airlines Limited

FORUM ONLINE

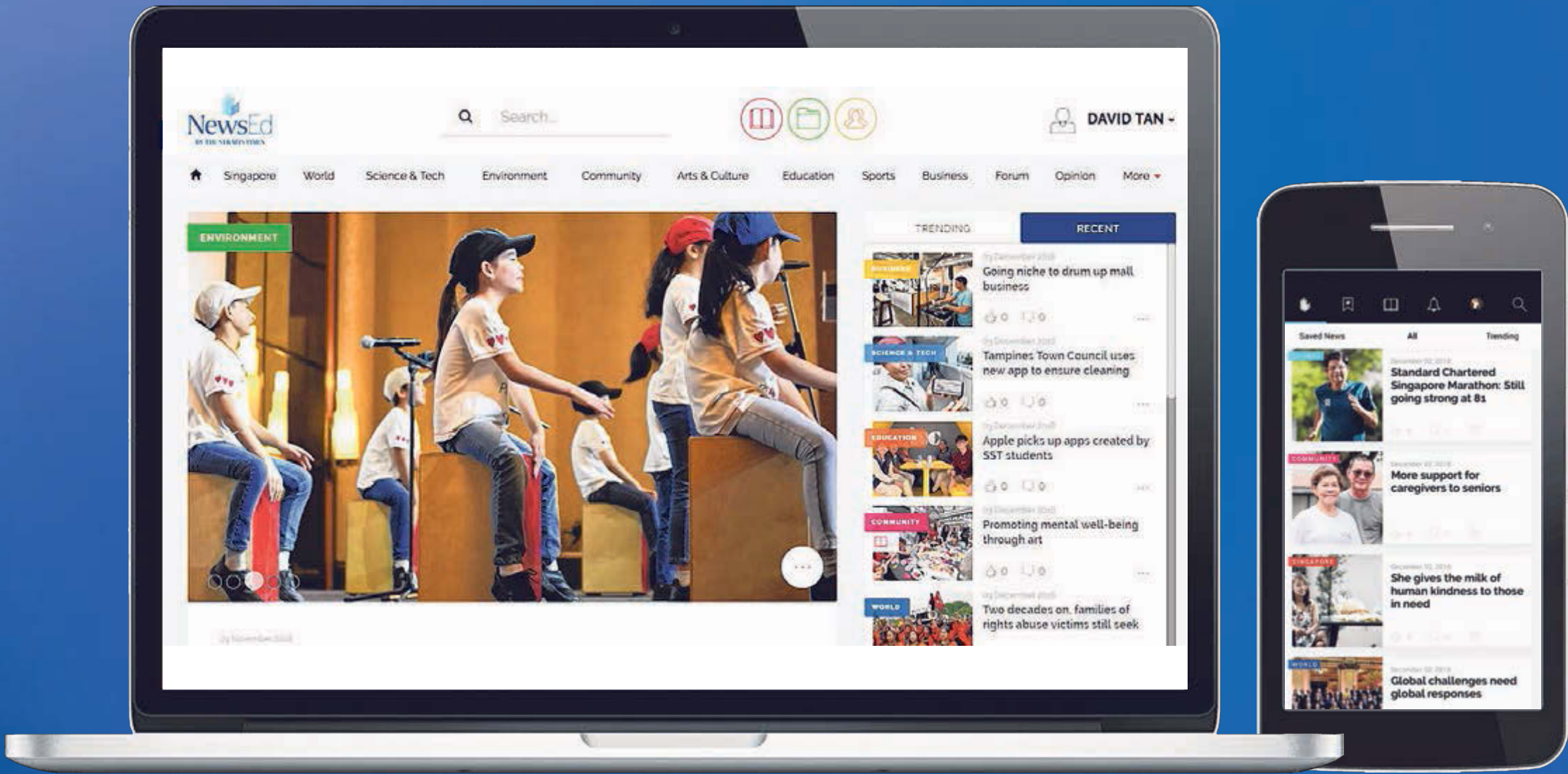
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